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BOOK.**

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OF BOSTON,

WIFE OF COL. JAMES WARREN SEVER,

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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE

NEW SERIES, Vol. XX.

67

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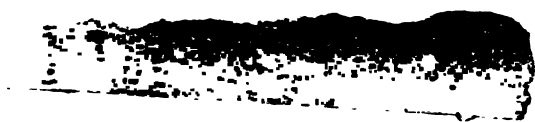
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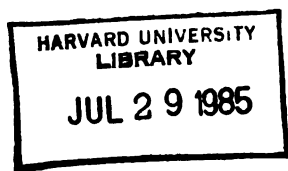
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CONTENTS

OF VOL. XX.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

	PAGE
Chapter XXX. Take Care !	1
" XXXI. A Father's Heart	8
" XXXII. A Menaced Home	14
" XXXIII. Pax all round	21
" XXXIV. In the Office	113
" XXXV. An Encounter	121
" XXXVI. Inveni Portum	128
" XXXVII. Civilisation and Savagery	134
" XXXVIII. Trying the Pistol	225
" XXXIX. A New Proposal	230
" XL. Old and New Quarters	237
" XLI. Again : Inveni Portum	244
" XLII. A Third Alternative	250
" XLIII. A Meeting	337
" XLIV. Off	344
" XLV. Cheated	350
" XLVI. In the Smoke	357
" XLVII. Brown Willy	440
" XLVIII. Esther's Advocates	454
" XLIX. Across the Marsh	461
" L. A Confidence	468
" LI. Captured	473
" LII. Throwing up the Ball	561
" LIII. The End of the Will	568
" LIV. Once More ' Inveni Portum '	575
" LV. The Right Men in the Right Places	579
" LVI. ' Civilisation be Blowed '	584

	PAGE
SCILLIES, THE, AND THE SCILLONIANS	482
SIGN-PAINTER, TO A	291
SOME HIGH NOTES	608
SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH	257
SOUL'S AWAKENING, THE	67
STRANGERS, AND TAKEN IN	178
THE ARBOUR IN THE GARDEN	509
THE BISHOP'S NOMINEE	590
THE SCILLIES AND THE SCILLONIANS	482
THE SOUL'S AWAKENING	67
TITHES, FOREST	293
TO A SIGN-PAINTER	291
ULRICH OF LICHTENSTEIN	69
UNPUBLISHED LETTERS, SOME, OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH	257
USEFUL PEOPLE	277
WESTMINSTER ABBEY, ACTORS AND ACTRESSES IN	373
WILLS AND TESTAMENTS, LAST	525
WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF	257

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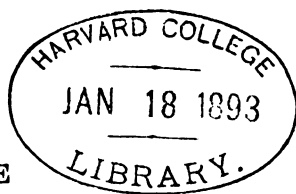
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JANUARY 1893.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXX.

TAKE CARE!

THE day was rapidly closing in. The tidings that the Tolmenna cottage had been unroofed and dismantled by Physic and a party of workmen had spread through the neighbourhood. Physic was no favourite, although the Moridegs were objects of mistrust rather than of favour, yet the fact that they were driven out of home—a home that had been theirs for three generations, a house that had been built by Roger's father—roused general sympathy, and when work was over many labourers came to volunteer their assistance to remove furniture and make habitable the cattle-shed that had been given up to the family for a temporary shelter. Happily no bullocks had been housed in the shed for a couple of years, so that it was in passably clean condition. But it was deficient in chimney, so a hole was knocked in the roof and a barrel inserted from which both ends had been removed, to serve as a vent for the smoke. Fern and moss were collected and littered on the floor, and with the skill and ingenuity only possessed by men experienced to move great masses of stone, a slab of granite was placed on rollers, and, with crowbars, was easily run in at the door and planted under this improvised chimney as a hearth.

Good humour, readiness to help, and mirth prevailed; even old Roger was roused out of his lethargy to share in the work of

making the place habitable, and to loudly lament that his opportunity had been lost or neglected. On this string he harped incessantly ; it was his one tune.

‘Providence her give us a chance, and us ungrateful creatures puts it aside. If I’d a knacked Physic on the head wi’ a stone, or skat his neddick wi’ a stick, then Tolmenna ’ud a’ been standen’ now, and ’ud a-stood on for ages for Esther and her childer, and her childer-vean (little children).’

‘Joe,’ said a workman to his fellow, ‘I wouldn’t be old Physic in a dark lane—nay, anywhere, when Uncle Roger be about wi’ his gun, would you?’

‘I reckon,’ answered the man addressed, ‘Physic will be going a bit too far some day, as he’ll find to his cost.’

‘Happen as will, and who’ll be sorry?’ observed the first.

The cottage was still without a window, for the farmer who owned the ‘linney’ objected to a hole being knocked through the walls. ‘For sure,’ said he, ‘if you begin to knock a hole, all the walls ’ll follow.’ And Mrs. Morideg observed that none was needed. Now that a chimney had been formed in the roof, sufficient light fell through it for cooking purposes, and ‘for what else, soas! can volks want light?’

Evening had closed, but not darkness, for the moon was at full and shone over the moors, lighting them almost as clear as day, turning the grey moss of Trewortha Marsh into a sheet of silver, so that it looked as if it had reverted to its ancient condition of lake. Far away on a great bank of moor the moon lit up a block of granite that went by the name of the ‘Grey Mare,’ and made of it as much a landmark by night as by day. One little orange star shone on the moorside from a lone cottage beyond the marsh (Colquite), where lived a solitary squatter.

The number of men had increased about the hovel, and a few women from the nearest farm and its cottages had also come to the spot to assist, or to comment on the proceedings. Justinian signed to Esther to accompany him to a distance from the throng.

‘I am hungry,’ said he. ‘I have been working hard, and have been without food several hours. So have you, and I do not fancy the old folks have much provision. Come with me to “The Chough,” Mrs. Penwarden will help. I’ll get her to pack a basket with bread and cheese, and any cold meat she can spare; but first of all we must have something to eat ourselves, or we shall faint. I wish,’ said Justinian, throwing up his head, ‘that I

hadn't spent all the money my father left me, or I would have rewarded the men all round for their help to-day.'

Esther accompanied him after she had searched for, and found, a basket that would serve her purpose among the goods transferred from Tolmenna.

There was frost in the air. The sky was clear, of silvery blue-grey, with here and there a suspicion of stars sparkling, then vanishing; on the granite-serrated crest of Kilmar a faint halo rested, the reflex of the western sky still flushing where the sun had gone down beyond Scilly. A curlew uttered its plaintive cry at intervals. No sound of murmuring water reached the ear, as every stream was smothered in Trewortha Marsh.

Esther, whose rude nature, because rude, was responsive to every change in the scenery and atmospheric variation, but who, from her rudeness, could not express her sense of the beauty and solemnity of the scene by any expletives and exclamations, broke out into legend. 'They do say,' said she, 'that is, the ou'd folks, as there was a city over yonder as they ca'd Tresillan. There were a palace there, and a king, wi' a crown o' gould; ay! he was a wicked sort o' a man wi' no love for the poor in him. And they was a-keeping feast i' Tresillan. 'Twere the day o' the foundin' o' this city, and the king and all his great men and grand ladies was sitting to table eatin' and drinkin' off dishes o' red gould. Then there came to the hall a poor beggar-man a' i' rags, and he went up to the table and for the love o' God he asked as the king 'ud gi'e him a bit o' the meat off the dish. But the king he laughed, and sez he: "No, man, I want all for the lords and the ladies." Then he up an' asked for the bones as they had a' picked. "No, man," sez the king, "I want they for the dogs." Then the beggar-man he said as how he were nigh on dead wi' hunger, and he asked if the king 'ud gi'e him the gravy i' the dish. But the king he said, sez he: "Man, that I want for the zoppin' o' my bread." "Then," sez the beggar-man, "gi'e me some o' thickey there crumbs you'm a-crumlin' in your fingers." "For sure I wint," said the king; "I want they to feed the pigeons on the roof." Sure he said it. Then the beggar-man made bowlder still, and he went right on end up to the table, and sez he: "Gi'e me the dish." Thereat, I reckon, there rose a brave laugh from all the lords and ladies, for the dish her were o' red, red gowld. But the king, he were that angered, he up wi' the dish and he throwed her at the beggar-man, and the ou'd man fell down wi' the blood runnin'

from his head. And afore he died he ill-wished the king and his castle, and his lords and ladies and servants all, and all the wicked city, that her shu'd go down un'er grund, and be a marsh for ever.'

'You don't believe such rubbish, surely?'

'Hearken to the rest. Then the ou'd volks says that ever after there groweth i' the marsh a red sort o' a moss like blid' (blood), 'and there run'th a trickle o' red water like blid, and so it ever will in testimony to the same. I've zeed'n. I've zeed'n scoores o' times.'

'It's all nonsense,' said Justinian.

'You mun say so. But it's comfort, it be, to us poor folk to know that an ill-wish can do all that when us be dringed and trod down by the rich and mighty—such as by thickey king, and such as by Lawyer Physic. For sure sartain, if the ou'd beggar cou'd ill-wish the king and all the city and sink 'em in the marsh, my gran'mother can ill-wish and bring down into the dust that Lawyer Physic; and her'll do it too—no mistake. The Lord haan't gi'en us poor folk much, but he's 'gi'en us that—and us can do it—leastways gran'mother can, and her will.' After a few steps in silence, Esther continued: 'Folks do say that the red blid 'll rin, and the red moss stained in the blid 'll grow till the Day o' Judgment, and then the city an' the king an' a' will come up out o' the marsh, an' then the ou'd beggar-man 'll hand up the dish and show his cracken crown and ask for judgment on the king, but the king 'll argie an' say he's been down in the meshes for hundreds o' hundreds o' years wi' his mow full of ven water, and if that ain't judgment enough, then some volks be unraysonable, and I don't know nothing more about it.'

'These are old wives' tales,' said Justinian, 'and I don't heed them a bit. Let us talk of something else. I'm sorry to have to go to "The Chough" to get what is wanted, when I might go to Curgenven and take thence what is a hundred times better, but I have my reasons.' He shrugged his shoulders and swung his arms in a devil-may-care fashion, and continued, talking more to himself than to his companion: 'My father has gone and got married, and he's old enough to know better. I don't approve of these goings-on. If he'd had as much good feeling as you could pack into the heart of a mouse he'd have consulted me first. It's been a sneaking proceeding all through, and against my principles; he should have told me like a man what rigs he was up to, and looked me in the face, and not have shammed he was off to

Scotland to see if he could find a good salmon river to hire for next spring. Salmon river indeed! I'll go home whistling with my hands in my pockets, as if I didn't care whether he brought home one wife or five hundred, like Solomon. I'll let him understand that I'll not be mothered by any of them.'

He talked with a swagger to hide his own uneasiness and distress—a distress that broke out in his heart whenever his mind recurred to home. He loved his father so deeply that he could not endure that there should be another intruded to share their love, and probably rob him of the best portion. As he thus spoke in braggart fashion he had forgotten the girl at his side, and thought only of himself and his father. But he came out of the lane upon the open space where stood a tavern, 'The Chough,' frequented by a few quarry and moor men, and by an occasional labourer from one of the farms. None of the usual guests were there this evening; all were engaged in assisting old Roger Morideg into his new cottage, or were looking on and passing their comments or giving their advice.

Justinian went in at the door and entered the low room that was lighted by a pendent oil lamp. He called to the landlady imperiously, told her what he wanted, and asked for some refreshment as speedily as it could be prepared. Then he threw himself on a bench and directed Esther to sit against the wall on the inside of the table opposite him.

Mrs. Penwarden was a tenant of the Curgenven estate, and willing to oblige. She was a hale, honest woman, with fresh colour, who could not only hold her own with her customers, but could turn out a disorderly fellow who had drunk too much and had become quarrelsome.

She looked hard at Esther, who had taken the place indicated, and had planted her bare elbows on the table and rested her chin in her palms. The light from the pendent lamp fell over her tumbled red hair and made dark shadows under her brows and a shade beneath the high and prominent cheek-bones. A handsome, daring girl she seemed, whose only law was her own will, and whose will was as free, as vagrant, and at times as furious as the winds that swept the moor.

'I'll do you a rasher o' bacon and some eggs,' said Mrs. Penwarden, 'if you can wait a quarter of an hour.'

'Ay, do. Esther and I have eaten nothing. But first bring us some shandygaff to cool our fiery throats.'

‘Have the old folks got in fitty-like?’ asked the hostess.

‘Pretty well,’ answered Justinian. ‘There are a score of helpers now. It was just at first there were none.’

Presently, when he could hear the fizzing on the fire of the broiling ham, Justinian rose and left the inn, saying that he would go and listen whether the ringers had tired of making fools of themselves, or whether they were still sounding a peal. ‘I’ll not go home,’ said he, ‘till those confounded bells have done.’

Whilst Justinian was intent listening to hear whether the silence were due to a pause or to the ringers having left their work, Mrs. Penwarden entered the room and threw a cloth over the table with a ‘By your leave, Esther. Please lift them elbows a minute.’ Then, leaning across the table, she said in a confidential tone: ‘Esther, my dear, take care of yourself, and don’ty be made a fool of, like your mother.’

‘What of my mother?’

‘It’s well meant, my dear,’ said the good woman, seating herself in the place vacated by Justinian, ‘so take it right from me. It don’t seem fitty that you—the such as you, a Morideg—should be runnin’ wild day and night wi’ the young squire, and he a Curgenven.’

‘Why not?’

‘Why not, soas!’ repeated Mrs. Penwarden with a Cornish interjection. ‘For the best o’ good reasons. If your mother had took a little more care of herself, you’d not be Esther Morideg, but be ca’d after your father, and have him to look after you. Don’t you be made a fool of for your own sake—no, nor yet for the young squire’s sake, neither. He’s a good young chap, but if ort were to come wrong ’twixt you and he ’twould be the worst as could hap to ’n for ever after. ’Twould be as a black blot again’ his name, and nobody would say a word to ’n, and come nigh Curgenven.’

The girl looked steadily into the landlady’s eyes. ‘You know nort,’ she said. ‘He be bound to Miss Alice at the Tolmenna stone, that’s fact.’

‘No, my dear, don’ty think it. If Miss Alice was to hear what folks say—and they be beginning to talk already, so I bid’y be careful—her’d have nothing more to say to him.’

‘Folks never say nothing.’

‘Yes, they do; not much, but they be screwing up their eyes wi’ looking at you both, and wondering what will come of it all.

Do'y think they don't know where he's off to when he goes out on the moor? and a score o' times, when he's not going your way, folks think he is. Take you care, Esther. Your mother may have listened to some fine young gentleman—and he left her and a chil-vean, that is, wi' you—and you're Esther Morideg only.'

'What is that?' asked Justinian, entering. But he did not wait to have his question answered; he threw himself on the bench and said: 'I believe they're tired at last. Now, Mrs. Penwarden, is the rasher ready?' Justinian found Esther in no humour to eat or to speak. He insisted on her taking something, but he could hardly extract a word from her. She answered in monosyllables, and sat with her cheek resting in one hand and the other arm folded across her bosom. She had tucked up her short sleeves whilst at work, and had not lowered them; Justinian could not fail to observe and admire the beautiful moulding of her arms thus exposed. And now that her face was inclined, the light from above produced less hard shadows, it fell over her rounded cheek, and kindled her hair of copper sheen. By daylight the face lacked delicacy of texture in complexion and evenness of colour, but in the light from the lamp all such imperfections were lost, and Justinian found himself looking with admiration at Esther's beauty. She had her little finger curled over her lower lip; it was between her teeth, and she was biting it. He looked down abashed when he saw that her eyes were intently studying him.

When the basket was packed, Justinian and Esther rose, and he said: 'I'll go with you part way.'

'Nay; I can find my own road, thanky.'

'But I wish to. I shall carry the basket as far as the cross, where our paths separate. You'll not refuse me that, Esther?'

She made no reply, and they went forth into the moonlight. The Curgenven woods lay below, dark as ink in the silvered landscape, and the moonbeams were reflected as a star from the glass of the conservatory. The house itself could not be seen. Its back was towards the rising ground, and it was banked up in rear by noble beeches and sycamores.

Justinian walked in silence beside Esther through the lane which after about a mile led out upon the moor. The solemnity of the night, or some influence which neither understood, weighed on both, and made them indisposed to speak. They drew in with long breaths the pure air, and the moon cast their shadows in fantastic forms on the hedges of granite blocks that skirted their way.

Presently they reached an ancient cross of moorstone, rudely cut, one of the many similar monuments that abound in Cornwall. It marked a point where lanes diverged at the edge of the common. There Esther stood still. Justinian put down the basket and took both her hands in his. For a moment or two he stood there without speaking, a warm wave rushing through all his veins. Then he drew her towards him and kissed her lips.

Instantly she thrust him away. 'No!' she said. 'Not me—Alice.'

Her bosom heaved, and she gasped for breath.

'No!' she said, and she waved both hands before her, as though weaving some spell in the air. 'No. I wish you well! That is all. I wish you well!' Then she stooped, took up the basket and fled running, tripping over hummocks of furze, then relaxing her pace, and the tears coursed down her cheeks in the moonlight.

Justinian turned when she had disappeared over the hill, and uttered an exclamation. He saw his father!

CHAPTER XXXI.

A FATHER'S HEART.

THE carriage that brought to Curgenven the newly-married pair passed under a triumphal arch that bore the inscription 'Welcome.' The arch had been set up by order of Mr. Physic, and without zeal by the gardener, who had received notice to quit. The woman at the lodge curtsied, but that was one of the conditions on which she occupied the cottage rent free. The five church bells were ringing, for the men who pulled the ropes expected to receive four shillings apiece for their trouble, as well as drink and cake.

A few villagers along the road to Curgenven had come to their doors and looked at the carriage as it rolled by, but had not waved handkerchiefs and cheered; had, in fact, exhibited no particular marks of interest in, and sympathy with, the event. For Mr. Physic had forgotten to remind the squire that the tenantry expected on such an occasion to be fed with roast beef, and their thirsty throats moistened with beer, on the terrace or in the avenue, at the expense of the lord of the manor. Mr. Percival had not thought of such a thing, not having been reared in the

position of squire. Consequently, the general opinion of the people of Curgenven was that the new squire was 'no gentleman.'

Percival, in ignorance of the dissatisfaction with which he was regarded, yet wondering somewhat at the lack of enthusiasm with which he and his bride were received, had his head out of the carriage window.

'I wonder where he is?' he asked. 'Theresa, look out on your side. I made sure he would have ridden to meet us, and have trotted back at our side. There he is—no, it is the butcher's boy. Do you fancy that he may have been walking, and we have whirled past without observing him.'

'He has not been on my side of the road,' answered Mrs. Curgenven.

'I hope the dear fellow is not unwell,' said Percival, withdrawing his head. 'But it is odd. It is unprecedented. I counted on his coming to meet us.' Then, after a little rumination, 'Surely he cannot have forgotten the day. He is thoughtless—as I have ever been.'

'There are the bells to remind him,' said Theresa.

'Ah! but he is a scatterbrain. He may think the ringers are practising.'

The carriage drew up at the main entrance to the manor-house, and when Percival hastily worked at the carriage door handle to get it open that he might dash out in quest of Justinian, he saw before him only Mr. Physic with a bouquet of hothouse flowers in his hand, and behind him the new domestics he had engaged in the place of those who had taken themselves off.

'I say, Physic, where is my boy?'

Percival had jumped out of the carriage and run up the steps, forgetful of his wife, whom he left to the groom to assist to dismount.

'On the moors, I fancy, sir.'

'He is not ill?'

'Oh dear no; in rude health.'

'Then why is he not here?'

Physic laughed, and then, passing Mr. Percival, stepped to Theresa, offered her the bouquet, and said with a bow and smile, 'Allow me to welcome to her home at last, Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.'

Mr. Percival having reached the hall, found Bathsheba, and at once shook her hand and asked: 'I say, Bath, where is Master Justin?'

The housekeeper replied that she thought Justinian had gone to the Rectory, and then with the forwardness of an old servant, said, 'Go and see to the lady, master; the young gentleman will take care of himself.'

Percival accepted the admonition, and hastened to show more attention to his wife. He conducted her into the hall, and showed her upstairs to her room. Then he ran off to the Parsonage to inquire after his son. 'There will be time enough before Theresa is ready for something to eat.'

Percival arrived at the Rectory, and rang the front door bell. The maid answered, and he inquired if Justinian were there. She believed not, but would go and inquire. Then Mrs. Jane Curgenven, hearing the voice of Percival in the hall as she was descending the stairs, came to him and welcomed him graciously. She hoped he was well, and that the fresh pure air of Scotland had done him good; that he had been able to secure a river for salmon-fishing for the ensuing season. No—Justinian was not at the Parsonage. He had been there, but had gone away again. She (Jane) believed that he had come to persuade Alice to go a ride with him, but she had been detained by her music lesson, so that Justinian had been constrained to go without her.

Would Percival come in? Jane was dying to hear about her relatives at Drumduskie. What did he think of the place? Was he not charmed with the associations? How did he think the girls were looking? And Drumduskie himself; was he as much of a cockney as ever? It was the fashion of her family, out of Scotland, to disparage the cornfactor. Percival Curgenven would not sit down. He replied that he was going to dine, but that he was impatient to see his son, who, carelessly and without proper consideration, had absented himself. He asked how the boy was.

'Oh,' said Jane, 'he is flourishing. I cannot say that he shows much inclination for anything save sport. You really, Percival, must put him through the mill. With his position he must acquire the rudiments of scholarship. Surely you can spare us a few minutes. I am so anxious to learn your opinion of beautiful Drumduskie, and to hear whether any alterations have been made in the place. I wish you had seen it in spring. You had better come in. No! I don't think you are looking quite yourself. Tired with the journey? Well, it is a long way from town, and the trains do not always fit at Plymouth. It is vexatious to have to wait there when one is tired.'

Percival left the Rectory with an oppression on his heart. Not by a word had Jane alluded to his wife. She had ignored his marriage, had addressed him as though he stood on the old footing, and no such person as Theresa had appeared at Curgenven to change relations. When he was back at the great house he found Physic there still; the agent wished to know whether Percival were satisfied with what had been done, and whether his services were further required.

'You had best stay and dine with us,' said Mr. Curgenven. 'Only *en famille*, of course, and no dressing. My wife and I are both tired and out of spirits, so you can enliven us. I wish Justinian were here. He is not at the Parsonage.'

'No, sir,' said the agent; 'I informed you I had met him going to the moor.'

'Did you? I forgot. What is he gone there for?'

Physic laughed. Something in the tone of his laugh jarred the feelings of Percival, and he looked into his face.

'What do you mean, Physic?'

'Well, sir, now you ask me, I may as well tell you. The young fellow goes a great deal too often to the Moridegs.'

'Oh, that old Roger will do him no harm.'

'No; not Roger, though he is a jail-bird.'

'You made him a jail-bird, Physic, I suppose. He was a harmless old fellow enough. As for his wife, she's a witch, but I don't fear her and her evil eye.'

'The young one's witchcraft is the most dangerous, and a loving eye is more mischievous than an evil one.'

'What do you mean, Physic?'

'I only repeat what I have heard. Mr. Justinian goes to the Tolmenna hut a great deal. Now I have had that pulled down, as it is on a property I have bought, and I suppose the Moridegs are all over the place, without a home to shelter them. There is no saying what your son may be doing in his chivalry to help them.'

'Stuff! I'll hear nothing of this,' said Percival Curgenven irritably. 'You shall stay for dinner, but enough of this scandal. I don't believe a word.'

However, the hint had lodged like a barbed arrow in the heart of the father, and had redoubled his uneasiness. The day had closed in, and still Justinian had not appeared.

When Percival had returned to the house, he ran upstairs to wash his hands and change his coat for dinner, and had met his

wife on the stairs descending. She looked pale and somewhat weary, but she had a smile on her lips. She had dressed hastily, put a flower in her bosom and another in her dark hair of so deep a crimson that it showed her pallor. She extended her arms to meet her husband.

‘Percy,’ said she, ‘you have not welcomed me home.’

He coloured and stammered.

‘Really, dear Theresa, I am ashamed. It is not my fault ; that confounded monkey, Justin, is to blame. Fancy that fellow running off to the moors when his father comes home. It is too bad, and it has upset me.’

She put up her hands, drew his face down to hers, and gently caressing his cheek, said, ‘Of course I forgive you. How could I do other—when you have given me a home, oh, and such a home. Dear ! I have taken my candle and been round it.’ Then she kissed him, and passed on the stairs continuing her descent.

The gong sounded for dinner whilst Percival was changing his boots. He came down as quickly as he could, and found his wife and Physic in the drawing-room awaiting him. During the meal he left the agent to carry on the conversation with Theresa. He was absent, listening for the foot of his son in the hall, and wondering that he did not return. If he joined in the conversation it was for but a moment, and then his mind wearied of whatever topic was discussed, and reverted to Justinian. He imagined that some accident might have befallen him, and then the hint thrown out by Physic disturbed him in no less degree.

He caught Theresa’s eye repeatedly resting on him. She knew what was troubling his thoughts, and destroying his zest for his dinner, for his wine, for the talk about the place and its affairs, the neighbourhood, and the petty incidents that had occurred during his brief absence.

At length, when the dessert was laid, he stood up, the anxiety had become unendurable, and he asked Theresa and Physic to excuse him, he must go and look for Justinian.

‘Let me go,’ said the agent. ‘I dare be sworn I know where to find him.’

‘No,’ said Percival hastily, and his brow contracted. ‘No, Physic, you remain here and amuse Mrs. Curgenven ; I must go after the truant myself. You will not be vexed with me, Theresa, will you ?’

‘No, dear, assuredly not.’

He went forth into the beautiful moonlit night, and, as we have seen, by accident took the right instead of the wrong lane that led forth upon the moor. The lanes that conducted to the waste were all provided with gates to prevent the wild ponies and cattle from straying into cultivated land and losing themselves among the roads. One of these gated lanes led by 'The Chough,' and at 'The Chough' he chanced to inquire, and thus learned that Justinian had gone part way to Trewortha with the girl Morideg. He followed, and arrived at the cross just as the young couple parted.

'Justin, my boy! What is the meaning of this?'

The lad was taken aback, and did not at once reply.

'Justin, I don't like this. Why are you away from home, and out and rambling the lanes with a common village girl?'

'She is not and never was a village girl,' answered Justinian recovering himself; 'she is a wild moor colt, that is all. What have you against her?'

'Nothing. I have something against you. It is not right for you——'

'Father, *honi soit qui mal y pense*. The Moridegs have been bundled neck and crop out of their house by that rascal Physic—I wonder why you employ him!—and I have been helping to house the homeless—a work of mercy, father.'

'It does not look well.'

'Alice likes her, so do I, and she loves us both, for on my honour, I believe we are the only people in the world who care for her, beside old Roger and her grandmother.'

'Well, well!—more of this another time. I have another crow to pluck with you.'

Justinian guessed what his father meant. He was silent for a minute or two, walking beside him. Then he said abruptly: 'It's no good your asking me to do it. I cannot call her my mother, and I won't. I love my own dear mother—and love to hear you talk of her, and tell how good she was. I can't take this strange woman into my heart, as you have done.'

'I do not ask you to do that,' said Mr. Curgenven, standing still and looking in the face of the tall, handsome boy, lit by the full lustre of the moon. And as he looked he saw in the eyes, in the brow—in all the upper part of the face, the likeness to his first wife. Percival Curgenven heaved a sigh. 'No, Justin, I do not ask you not to continue to love, I do not wish you for a

moment to forget your dear dead mother. I do not forget her, I do not cease to love her. But, my boy, you are old enough to know that such an establishment as Curgenven cannot be managed by old Bathsheba. She has kicked over the cauldron already. I must have some one competent to manage. I do not ask you to love my present wife in any degree as you do your own dead mother, but you must honour her as you regard me.'

'Yes, father,' said Justinian, subdued, 'I will do my best. Do you think she really cares for you, or has only taken you for your money?'

'I am sure she loves me.'

'If she is good to you I shall respect her. There—I promise that.'

'Do you consider, my boy,' continued Mr. Curgenven, 'that you have given me great pain to-day?'

'How so?'

'In absenting yourself on my arrival. It was a slight to my wife, and a cruel blow to me. You little know how you have hurt me.'

'Father!'

The lad threw his arms round Mr. Curgenven's neck. 'I am sorry. I was wrong; I was very wrong.'

'And now—one word, Justin, more. You say that your love is to your mother. Let the remembrance of her accompany you always when you are with that girl Esther.'

The lad squeezed his father's hand. He looked up in his father's face and said: 'I was foolish. For one moment a warmer thought came over me than I ought to have held, and I kissed her. I will not do it again. I promise you, father—by my thoughts and love of my mother.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MENACED HOME.

WHEN Percival left the dining-room, he begged Physis to excuse him, and remain with the wine as long as he liked. Mrs. Curgenven withdrew to the drawing-room. There the candles had been lighted in sconces on the wall, and a brisk bright fire was burning in the grate.

Theresa sank into an armchair before the fire.

The drawing-room was singularly beautiful; it was in white and gold, with a painted ceiling, and with charming Watteau subjects in panels on the walls. The room was lofty, curtains and furniture of turquoise-blue silk. Choice flowers from the greenhouse were arranged in every available vase and glass, and exhaled a delicate fragrance. The room was cheerful at night. There was a cut-glass chandelier in the midst, pendent from the ceiling. It was not lighted, but it reflected the twinkle of the fire and the flames of the candles on the walls.

Theresa was in a dark dress, the only dark object in this sparkling apartment.

As she sank into the easy-chair she uttered a sigh of satisfaction. At length she had found rest.

She looked dreamily into the fire, and her past unfurled before her. Never, from her infancy, had she possessed a home of her own. As a young girl she had lived on the charity of the kind old lady who had adopted her. On the death of Miss Fenton she had been cast adrift on the world, and when married hastily, it was not to be given a home by her sailor husband, but to be lodged in hotels and pensions, till he deserted her. After that her career had been varied and her fortune had been chequered. But never once in all the variations and chequerings had the time and chance come to her when she could call a space within four walls—her home. Except her little desk of inlaid olive wood, she had nothing that she could regard as permanently her own. Boxes, portmanteaus had been worn out with much travelling, dresses changed, little articles of jewelry had been got rid of in times of need. Only that small desk and the letters and other trifles it contained had remained to her of the past, and might alone have remained hers till her dying hands let go their clasp of it.

But now Percival Curgenven had given her a home—a beautiful home that had legitimately been hers for many years, but which had been usurped by another.

She turned her large dark eyes round and looked at every object in this fair parlour. She had excellent taste and she fully appreciated the beauty. But hardly as fully could she realise that it was her own. That chair in which she sat was her own now. And hitherto she had never even possessed a chair that was hers. Those she had rested in had been let with the lodgings, or were the furniture of the hotel. She put her hands to the soft silken

arms of the chair and clasped them, to feel that they were realities. She stood up, and walked round the room, touching the various objects, and whispering to herself, 'And this also is mine.' The flowers were from her conservatory. The old Sèvres and Dresden china belonged to her. She looked up at the painted ceiling. Cherubs were represented there flying, strewing flowers, and unrolling a scroll on which was inscribed the family motto, 'Tandem.'

'Tandem,' repeated Theresa after she had read it. 'At last! Yes—that is my motto; at last I have a home, at last rest, at last no concern for the morrow what it may bring forth.'

On a table was a little fan of white ivory delicately pierced, with the silk web adorned with spangles: one of the fans that were fashionable at the beginning of this century, fans to sparkle under sparkling chandeliers, fanning ladies in dresses of white gauze brodered with sparkling bugles.

Theresa took it up without much thought; opened and closed it, and returned with it in her hand to her seat before the fire. There she sat, not leaning back, but forward, with her head lightly bowed, looking into the fire, with the fan on her knees. Occasionally feeling inconveniently hot from the glow in the grate she unfurled the fan, and then let it fall together again, fold on fold, unconscious that it was closing, so abstracted was she in her thoughts.

She knew very well that her position would be a difficult one. She was without a friend near—a relative she had never to her knowledge had. By education and in feeling she was a lady, with the tastes, the instincts, the tact, the tenderness of a lady; but she was well convinced that her claim to be one would be disputed. She had been on the stage. What was to be expected of an actress? It was true that she had appeared on the boards in subsidiary characters, and for a very brief period indeed, nevertheless the fact remained, that she had been an actress. She had sung as a professional performer in concerts and oratorios. To have exercised a profession at all would damn her in many eyes. She had been a governess, and a governess in a family connected with the Curgenvens. She had—as she knew it would be put—occupied a menial position; and that it had been menial she could not deny. Finally there remained the fact that she was by birth worse than a nobody—literally was picked out of the gutter.

She had told everything to Percival. Percival could never reproach her with having hid aught from him. But she doubted whether she had done right in accepting him—not for her own

sake but for his. He had been told that he had best marry someone with an established position and with relatives, but he had persisted in taking her. Ought she not, for the sake of him, and as a return for his generous love, to have persisted on her side in refusing him? Then she asked herself—could she have borne to have gone on with such a life as had been hers, when the chance of leaving it had been given her? She gave a gasp, and looked hurriedly round, unfurled the fan once more, and again settled into thought.

Would it matter to her very greatly if the neighbourhood gave her the cold shoulder? She cared little or nothing for the position in society she had acquired, what she did value was the substantial reality of a home free from sordid money cares, that could not be taken from her—that none could dispute. As for social intercourse with the county people and parsons' wives, she did not suppose that it would prove to her a rich gain if she obtained it, or a sensible loss if she were denied it. The great smothering sand *dune* of common-place rolls over the coast-land and destroys all vegetation save the wiry grass and thistle that spring out of the poorest soil. There are those dunes in all spheres of life, in all much the same, and all equally sterile, all equally impatient of any form of life save the meanest and most vulgar.

Suddenly, with a shiver that thrilled her entire frame, Theresa started out of her dreams, looked over her shoulder, and uttered a cry of terror; then recovered herself and said—‘I beg your pardon, Mr. Physic. I did not hear you enter—and I thought I saw a ghost.’

‘I hope I am not intruding.’

‘Not at all,’ said coldly.

‘Mr. Curgenven will not be back for some time, not if he is sweeping the moors for that scapegrace son of his, who will give him trouble enough and to spare before many years are over. In the meanwhile, till his return, I should like a few words with you, madam.’

With her fan Theresa wearily indicated a chair.

Something in her gesture, in her expression of face, in the tone of her voice, angered the agent, and instead of seating himself he took hold of the chair, turned it round, and leaning an elbow on the back, and planting a knee on the seat, said: ‘Madam! so you think I am now nothing; that I am only your humble servant, to be ordered about, and bid send in my bill for

work done, and have the odd pence struck off in the cheque that pays me?’

Theresa looked at him in surprise.

‘Oh yes!’ sneered he, ‘you act your part well, my lady! You have climbed from the gutter to the *fauteuil*, and think to spurn me, do you?—eh?’

Theresa saw that he had been drinking, not enough to make him tipsy, but enough to give him insolence. She said: ‘I shall leave the room, Mr. Physic.’

‘You shall not,’ he replied; ‘I will bar your way.’

‘Then I shall ring to have you ejected.’

‘Oh yes! I like that! Have *me* ejected; *you* eject me! And do you know that I hold you, body and soul, in the hollow of my hand?’

Theresa put her hands on the elbows of her chair to raise herself. Physic at once discovered her object, and swinging the chair he leaned on round, he stepped forward and put his hand on her arm, forcing her back in her seat.

‘No,’ said he, ‘you shall not ring the bell. I advise you to listen to what I have to say. We must understand one another. You have had to listen to plain speeches in your life more than once. You were not born to be wrapt in cotton wool from every breath of cold, and have a gold spoon put to your mouth with sugared pap.’

‘I have had to put up with a great deal of impertinence and vulgarity, as you say,’ answered Theresa, raising the fan.

‘Yes,’ said he, ‘I understand what that fan means. You gave me a rap across the back of my hand with the reins once. And you are ready to do it again. But don’t be afraid of me. I have something to tell you that will astonish you, but I will not step another inch nearer to you than this—and see, I put the chair between us again.’ He resumed his first position.

‘Then be good enough to say what must be said in the fewest possible words.’

‘As you will, madam.’ He rested his chin in his hand, and kneeling on the turquoise-blue seat of his chair looked hard at her. ‘Humph! I did not know you were striking at higher game when you refused my honourable offer. But let me tell you, that clever as you have been in bringing down your quarry, you have made one fatal blunder. Do you remember that paper you put into my hands when you were in the Bungalow?’

Theresa started.

‘Do you remember what was endorsed on it? That it was the last will of Captain Lambert Curgenven? And that it was to be used or suppressed according as I thought good?’

Theresa nodded slightly. Her heart began to beat with real alarm.

‘Very well, madam,’ pursued the agent, ‘you never committed a greater folly in your life than when you put that paper into my hands. When you delivered that to me, you delivered yourself also, body and soul, to me. Look about you. That’s a pleasant fire, is it not? That’s a handsome, sparkling chandelier, ain’t it? This is a pretty room, with its white and gold and blue, is it not? You think it is all yours, don’t you? It is yours as long as I let you enjoy it; not an hour longer. You talk of ejecting me from the house! Why, madam, it is I who can eject you and your husband and his precious cub any day. I have the lever which will tumble you all down, and that lever you put into my palm—fool that you were.’

Physic was silent, and gazed with evil triumph on Theresa, who looked at him with large dazed eyes, half rising in her seat, the fan fallen at her feet.

‘Shall I tell you what that will contains which is now in my charge, to use or not to use as seems best to me? By that will, which is the only one ever made by Captain Lambert after his marriage with Miss Jane Pamphlet, and which was no marriage at all, as you were alive, he acknowledges the invalidity of the marriage and bequeaths all his estate in trust to Miss Jane Pamphlet, commonly known as Mrs. Lambert Curgenven, and to Mr. Percival Curgenven, in trust, I say, for his natural daughter, Alice Pamphlet, commonly known as Alice Curgenven. Now—how do you relish that, madam? Have I not in my hands something that can deal you a sharper rap than the reins in your hand dealt to me? Can’t I hurt you a good deal more than you hurt me, when you said, “I reject your offer, I won’t be Mrs. Physic,” a respectable man’s wife in a good business?’ He chuckled and rubbed his hands together over the chair-back.

‘I will speak of this to my husband,’ said Theresa in a tremulous voice, and put her hand to her head, where the pulses were throbbing as though to burst. A few minutes ago she was congratulating herself that she had at length found a home, certain to be hers for the remainder of her days, and already the insecurity

of her hold on it was revealed. She had craved for and found rest, but only for a few moments. She was again thrown back into the whirlpool of contending currents, in which she must continue to battle for existence.

‘No,’ answered Physic, ‘I forbid you to speak to Mr. Percival on the subject. You are a woman of the world and I am a man of the world—and we understand that with a certain class of people we must deal according to their folly. Your husband is one of those flyaway, romantic, up-on-top-of-a-pole folk. If he knew about this he would throw up the whole concern, and then where would he be, and his dearly beloved cub, Justinian, and you, my lady, who have spread your nets so cleverly? No, if you dare to speak to him of this, then the game is up. You need not unpack your travelling trunk; it is waste labour to take out the new dresses you bought, or had given you, in town, and fold them in drawers or bury them in wardrobes. Alter the direction from Curgenven House to the Pillbox, and send for a cab to remove you and your effects as soon as may be. But mind you, Mr. Percival will owe to the estate every penny that has been drawn from it since he came here. He will have to pay back what he took for all the presents he made you, for the marriage license, for everything, and you know well that will leave him something worse than a beggar. He is not the man to think of all this; we must think and provide for him. Upon my word! That will be a come down off his tall perch, to have to retreat with humiliation to the Pillbox again, and to have all the newly-engaged servants clamouring in his ears for their wages, and not have a penny in his pocket wherewith to satisfy their demands. Who can say whether the Pillbox is available to receive him again? I suppose he gave notice to surrender his tenure, and it may be let. Then whither is he to go to hide his head? How do you think he will relish the exchange into poverty from wealth—from being a somebody to sink into a nobody again? You may take my word for it, without counting the cost, he will throw up all if we allow him, and then in will march my Lady Jane and smoke all the rooms to disinfect them, polluted by your presence, and won’t she pirouette on stilts at your downfall!’

‘Where is this will you speak of?’

‘I have it in my desk in my office.’

‘I should wish to see it.’

‘I will bring you a copy.’

'I do not desire a copy. I must see the original. Bring it here.'

'No, thank you. If you want to see it, you must come to Liskeard and see it in my office.'

'I will do so. Now leave me.'

Mr. Physic left, and Theresa fell back in her chair, and let her arms drop by her side. She was as one stunned by a blow on the head. For some moments she could neither think nor feel. Consciousness departed, and all was dark before her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PAX ALL ROUND.

WHEN the light returned to Theresa's eyes, and the blood began once more to circulate in her veins, she saw Percival stooping over her, but it was some moments before she could realise who it was.

'My dear,' he asked, 'what is it? Are you overdone?'

She tried to smile to reassure him, but her muscles had not recovered sensibility.

He was alarmed. 'What has happened?' he asked. 'Do speak, Theresa. Have you fainted?'

Then with a gasp life returned, and she threw her arms round his neck and drew his head down to her face. Her cheek was cold, and a tear was on it like a drop of ice.

In his uneasiness, when he studied her countenance, he saw how sunken were the eyes, and he kissed her face.

'Are you very ill—do tell me, my dear? How has this come on you?'

'I shall be better directly,' she said, now panting for breath as though she had run a long way.

'Look, Theresa, here is Justinian,' said Percival Curgenven; 'the fellow has been found at last. I have brought him home, and now he desires to pay you his respects. But you are too tired, too ill—now.'

'No,' she said, recovering herself, and catching at the chance of diverting the current of her thoughts into another channel. 'No; where is he?'

Justinian stepped forward. He had entered the drawing-

room rather sheepishly, following his father, and had stood with his lips curled contemptuously at the endearing terms of his father addressed to Theresa, and had turned his head aside in disgust when she put her arms round her husband's neck.

Justinian had made up his mind, during the walk home at his father's side, as to the line he would adopt, as to the limits of his concession. He would be respectful and gracious to his step-mother as the wife of his father.

He was, however, resolved to let her clearly understand that he tolerated her presence in the house and accepted her as the companion of his father, much as he would accept a new spaniel or a parrot that his father had chosen to bring home as a pet. He would give her to understand that it would be lost labour for her to attempt to gain his esteem, let alone his affection; that he did harbour resentment towards her for having dared to step into that place which had once been occupied by his own mother, but that he would cover over his sentiments with a decent veil so as not to distress his father. But if, at any time, she attempted to sow discord between him and his father, then he would be free to express his opinions, and show his sentiments without reserve. It was advisable, nay, it was necessary, that the conditions of peace should be concluded at once; and Justinian desired to have a few words with the new Mrs. Curgenven, without the privity of his father. As Percival stood aside, Justinian advanced with a toss of his head and a swing in his walk, that, had Theresa been in a condition to observe him, would have told her at a glance how reluctant the boy was to come to an amicable arrangement.

'I am very sorry,' said he, awkwardly, 'that I was the cause of the accident when your collar-bone was broken.'

'Oh!' answered Theresa, with a smile, 'that was what brought your father to me; it was a happy accident to me.'

Justinian frowned and screwed up his lips. If it were so, then he had double cause to regret that the confounded fire-balloon was carried against the head of Mr. Physic's cob.

The shadow of his father had been on Theresa, now Mr. Curgenven stepped to the table, and the light from the candles on the mantelpiece fell on her face and revealed the worn, distressed expression, the lustrous eyes, the dark rings about them, and the paleness. The face was still beautiful, though youth had passed, and it wore at this moment a look of pleading pathos.

'I'm blessed !' said Justinian to himself. 'The poor devil *is* ill !'

Theresa held out her hand to the young fellow, and Justinian placed his in hers, coldly, with his fingers limp as strips of leather.

She did not appear to notice his lack of response, and retained his hand.

'I should like,' she said, turning her head towards her husband, 'I should like to have Justin here all to myself for a few minutes, between four eyes, as the Germans say.'

'Certainly, my dear, if you are sufficiently recovered for a talk. I'll go and look up Physic, and see whether my wine has sent him a dive under the table, or whether he has driven home. I have a few odd matters about which to talk to him.'

Then Mr. Curgenven left the room.

There was a stool under a little table near Theresa's chair. She pointed to it with her foot and said, 'Would you mind drawing that up close, and sitting on it ?'

The lad shuffled uneasily and made no attempt to comply with her request. He would not sit at her feet—at her feet indeed ! at her feet ! What are we coming to next ! She'd be ordering him about, make him say his catechism, bid him hold the wool whilst she unwound the skein ! Bid him stick his ears under the cap lest they should protrude !

He answered somewhat sternly, 'I'd rather stand ; I am not at all tired.'

'It was not for your sake—it was for mine I asked it,' said Theresa gently. 'I wished to study your face more closely. You have your mother's eyes and brow exactly. I am not surprised at your father loving you so dearly.'

'You knew my mother ?'

A little contraction—a little life in the hand she held.

'To be sure I did. Has not your father told you so ? I nursed her in her last illness. It was very sad to be ill to death in a Californian hotel, with folk coming and going, drinking, dancing, noise—and she——' Theresa studied his face, and then said : 'I wish you would stoop, just to be kind and oblige me. It is your mother, your sweet mother, I am looking at in you. Justin—I held her poor hand as I would hold yours now, held it when burning with fever, and held it as it grew cold in death.'

His fingers were trembling in hers, and he drew them hastily away lest she should notice it.

Then he bent on one knee, so as to place his face on a level with hers, and let her lay her hands on his shoulders.

‘I hope it will be a bond between us,’ said Theresa, ‘that we both loved her, though you do not remember her—or hardly so—yet you love her, and so did, and so do I.’

‘I think I can remember something about her.’

‘Yes, but you were very young. Do you know I received almost her last kiss. Not her last—that was for you. I had you in my arms and brought you to her, and held you over the bed to her. Then she put up her lips and touched with them this hand.’

She removed her right hand from Justinian’s shoulder. He took it at once, held it, and his mouth quivered. He wished to kiss where his mother had kissed, but his pride intervened and he let go her hand again.

‘I will tell you some day all that I can remember about her; but I knew her only when she was weak and ill. I never saw her in her full strength and beauty. And that which is a bond between you and me is a bond also between your father and me.’

‘Do you talk to him about my mother?’

‘Indeed I do. You need not think, Justin, that any love he may feel for me will diminish that he ever bears in his heart for her who was his first love. Love is not a stream which if diverted to water this field and that field is exhausted and leaves its bed dry. Nor is it soil that if it grow one crop is fatigued and cannot produce another. It is like the inexhaustible sun that can flood many with its light, and quicken them with its warmth, and each does not rob the other of what is his share. It is like the mighty ocean that can roll round and bathe many islands, and it is always the same wide and deep sea to one and all.’

A wonderful softness and sweetness was in her face as she spoke, it was as though some of the light and heat of that sun, some of the depth and saltiness of that ocean, were in the solemn dark eyes fixed on the boy, out of whose features all the hardness had gone, from whose lips the defiance had faded, and from whose eyes the antagonism had disappeared.

‘You ran away to-day, Justin, because you hated to see me arrive. Was it not so?’

The lad coloured and hung his head.

‘I know it was so; and I honour you for the chivalrous hold on the memory of your mother. You thought I would blur that over

in the heart of your father, and that I might in some way turn away his love from you.'

'Yes—it was so,' said Justinian.

'You were mistaken in thinking this. If we live together long, you will find how greatly you have been mistaken. I have but one object now in life, and that is to make your father happy, who has done so much for me; and I knew he could not be happy were there anything of estrangement between him and you. He could not love me if he thought I, in any manner, drew a bunch of nettles between himself and you. I believe it was the thought of your mother, the delight of having some one to speak to who remembered her, that brought about his entertaining some liking for me. For in me there was nothing else. I have neither youth nor looks——'

'Oh, stepmother, you are beautiful.'

'No, Justin, I am past the turn of life, and am withering slowly away. I am even past the time when jealousy affects me; as to yourself, I shall never rob you of any of your father's love. To-day he forgot me, he left me, so unhappy was he because you were away, and he ran off to find you without giving me another thought. This did not make me jealous. On the contrary, it made me admire and love your father all the more. It showed me what a depth of tenderness, what a strong, tough endurance of love there was in his heart, that makes him cling to one whom he loves and who belongs to him. I hope that I shall win in time some such deep strong love for myself. It is worth having. It is worth devoting one's life to deserve it. Do not undervalue it, Justin.'

The boy drew the stool from under the table, seated himself on it, and leaning his cheek on the arm of Theresa's chair looked up into her face. He had forgotten his mistrust, lost his dislike for her.

'I should wish to ask you something,' she said.

'Ask me what you will, stepmother.'

'Do you suppose your father would be content to return to the old house and manner of life?'

'What—to that beastly Pillbox? I should just think not.'

'Is he happy here in this grand mansion?'

'Of course he is. You wouldn't like to have to go back to Miss Treise, the milliner's little lodgings over the shop, would you, now?'

‘No, perhaps not.’

‘I should say most certainly not.’

‘But,’ continued Theresa, ‘your father was never the man to value splendour and comforts.’

‘Because he never had the chance of enjoying them. He had to manage to get along as best he might in old days. He didn’t like it, but he couldn’t help it. Now it’s quite another matter. By Jove!’ exclaimed the boy, ‘if I thought it was all up with us here, and we had to quit, I’d cut my stick and be off out of the country, anywhere. I wouldn’t show my face in Liskeard, no nor in England; having been a young squire once, I couldn’t come down.’

‘You are confident your father likes his present condition? He grumbles a good deal about it.’

‘Oh, that’s his way. Of course he likes to be a J.P. and a squire, and to be able to give a fellow shooting and fishing over his property and in his waters, and to have money in his pocket instead of a hole. Only he doesn’t care to show how it pleases him. That’s all.’

Justinian considered a moment, then laughed and said, ‘And what’s as jolly as anything is to be able to order that chap Physic about, and have him awfully civil, instead of being patronised by him as we were before. He is a cad, and I hate him.’

Justinian drummed with his fingers on the chair. Then he said, ‘What do you think, stepmother, that Physic has been about? He has turned the Moridegs out of their house, has torn the roof off and pulled down the walls.’

‘Who are the Moridegs?’

‘Oh! don’t you know? Old Roger knocked Physic down when he was told that he was to be turned out of house and home by him, and so Physic sent him to prison. He is quite an old chap and perfectly harmless. His wife is a queer creature, people think her a white-witch and that she has the evil eye, but I don’t hold with all that stuff.’

‘Have they a family?’

‘N—no, not exactly. There’s a grandchild, you know. It’s an awful shame, and that is one reason why I have been away from Curgenven to-day. I have been seeing these poor old creatures under shelter. Physic would have let them starve and die of exposure on the moor.’

‘And Mr. Physic, if he could, would turn us out, you and your father and me, turn us out of this beautiful house.’

'I have no doubt about it,' answered Justinian with vehemence. 'Not a shadow of a doubt about it. The joy and fun is—he can't.'

'I hope not.'

'I am sure he cannot. By Jove, if I thought he could I'd knock him down as old Morideg did, if I had to go to gaol for it. I'd go and sing praises there, as Paul and Silas did.'

'He shall not do it,' said Theresa in a low tone. 'No, he shall not do it.'

Then Mr. Curgenven came in. He looked surprised to see his rebellious boy sitting familiarly by Theresa's side—close to her, playing with her fan that he had picked up from the floor.

'Physic is gone,' said Percival Curgenven. 'He'll have to come out again and see me, I suppose. It is foolish of him to leave without a word.'

'But it is late, Percival, and he has a long drive. How was he to know when you would be returning home? I rather want to go into Liskeard in a day or two, and then I can take him a message from you.'

'That will do. Well! how do you and Justin get on together? Patched up any little disagreements, I hope.'

'We are very good friends,' said Theresa.

'We are the best of friends,' said the boy, standing up, 'and, I say, governor, you might have done worse; as stepmothers go, you couldn't have done better—so Pax all round, I say.'

(To be continued.)

CHARACTER NOTES.

THE MONEY-SPINNER.

'Notre humeur met le prix à tout ce qui vient de la fortune.'

HE lives, of course, in the most correct part of town. His sons see to such things for him. They are young men with a very just sense of the responsibility of his position, and take care that his money shall be spent in the most elegant and fashionable manner possible. Quite regardless, therefore, of the trouble thereby entailed upon them—and the expense thereby entailed upon him—they have taken care that his house shall be a delicious conglomerate of soft carpets, rare flowers, the latest thing in decorations and furniture, the best French cooks, and the most irreproachable butler. The money-spinner would indeed be an ungrateful fiend if, after expending so much trouble upon it, the sons could not use the paternal mansion as headquarters for their friends, and if he made any objection to his married daughter giving dances in his drawing-room, and erecting the sweetest little stage in the library for private theatricals. But there are people who can make money and cannot appreciate it. Just as there are other people who can appreciate money but cannot make it. Of the first, the money-spinner might almost be taken as an example. Of the second, his children are undoubtedly admirable instances. They are able to say, with a very laudable pride, that they keep the house 'warm' and give the servants 'something to do.' They are wont to add that there is nothing like a large house-party for keeping poor old papa's spirits up. The married daughter, with a taste for society, lays a very great stress upon this point. As everyone says she is a devoted daughter, she certainly ought to know what is good for poor old papa's spirits. And yet, but for her word, one would scarcely think the house-party has an enlivening effect upon him. When he creeps downstairs forlornly, he is apt to encounter elegant young ladies in travelling costumes ascending his staircase, followed by immense trunks. Beyond the fact that they are going to be his visitors, a fact which, under the circumstances, any fool could guess, he knows neither who has invited them, nor how long they propose to stay, nor even what are their names.

That they are equally ignorant with regard to him is revealed to him by overhearing one of them ask another, 'Who ever is *that* old thing?' Edith (the married daughter) assures him that he is in very good society—better, she insinuates very sweetly and gracefully, than perhaps he has been used to. She cannot forget, being a person of very refined and delicate tastes, his Clapham origin. And, knowing always what is best for poor dear papa, will not allow him to forget it either. Perhaps the society is good. Perhaps the money-spinner thinks, as he looks down a tableful of guests who are very much appreciating his delicate wines and the French cooking—that it is *too* good for him. He sits at the head of the table in a rarely broken silence. The young men talk across him, after dinner, on subjects of which he knows nothing. Occasionally one or other of them thinks that the old boy seems rather out of things, and attempts to draw him into the conversation. But they soon find out he has never been at Oxford, and is consequently impossible. They are so kind as to say that he is good enough perhaps for dollar-grinding, but a fellow, by Jove, of absolutely no cultchah whatever. So he is left to finger his wine-glass with bent hands that shake a little, and says nothing. He is left sitting there in the same attitude, when the others have gone to the library to rehearse the play Edith is so very kindly getting up for a charity. He would sit there perhaps for another hour, but the butler, quite firm and polite, points out to him that if the table is not cleared the servants' supper will be delayed. He moves hastily, apologetically, and creeps up to the drawing-room. But it is bare of furniture, and drugged for Edith's skirt-dancing party to-morrow. He had forgotten the party. He is beginning to forget many things. In the library a young lady—the Girl of the Stairs—is in a stage faint in his particular arm-chair. She wakes up when he comes in, and says with an immensely becoming blush, directed at the eldest son, that if anyone else is going to look on, she really doesn't think she can go on with this utterly ridiculous scene and make such an awful idiot of herself. 'You need not mind me,' the money-spinner murmurs in his old voice, 'for I shall not be looking at you.' Perhaps it occurs to him afterwards that this is not what he was meant to say, that there is a plainness and directness in his form of speech which savours odiously of Clapham. One of the sons, who is always so thoughtful, accommodates poor old papa with the music-stool, the only seat the actors have not taken

possession of. He sits there looking so ridiculously depressed and old that Edith whispers at last that he is a perfect damper on them all, and if he is going to look like that he had better go to bed. Perhaps he despairs of looking anything except like that. So he goes, slowly, to bed. The theatricals—for the charity—have a way of always taking that arm-chair, he finds. He also discovers that the whole plot of the piece rests upon one of the Oxford men finding, in the fourth act, someone's long lost Will inside the evening newspaper. Further, the Oxford man considers that this incident gives him a right to retain that newspaper and read it intermittently, through the first three acts. The stage is very comfortably situated near the fire. Some woman, with an odd compassion, very much out of place, for poor old papa looking so utterly ridiculous on his music-stool, asks if he cannot sit among the performers during rehearsals and warm himself there by the fire? But she is assured that it would be horribly unprofessional and isn't to be thought of.

Everyone in town says the skirt-dancing parties are perfectly charming and brilliantly successful. If the money-spinner is not grateful for all the trouble Edith takes in getting them up, he certainly ought to be. It is not as if they were for *her* honour and glory. Not at all. They are given in his name, and it is therefore plainly his duty to make himself agreeable. Perhaps he tries. Perhaps it is Clapham still cleaving to him which makes him so dull, and apathetic, and heavy. Perhaps it is only because he is old, and tired. Who knows? If he rouses himself to think at all, it is perhaps to reflect that his mother—dead, God knows how many years ago—would scarcely have thought, in her *bourgeoise* way, that some of the fine ladies he is entertaining were altogether respectable. Perhaps, he would think himself—if he were allowed to think independently—that the entertainment itself is—well, a trifle vulgar. But then, as Edith told him this morning, he is so awfully Clapham. It must be because his mind is so permeated with the vulgarity of his native soil, that he sees vulgarity even in a chaste and beautiful entertainment which is the very height of fashion.

His wife, for he has a wife, is not a creature of his common and earthy mould. She is far younger, with beauty still, an aristocratic origin, a delicate fragility, and a lung complaint which she dresses to perfection. She only lives in England a few months out of every year. The doctors say she is a perfect exotic. A

sweet term, which suits her to perfection. She has a villa in Algiers, and bears up wonderfully (her physician says she has a great heart, although she is so frail) at the parting from her husband which takes place every year. He is more emotional. The *bourgeois* always are. That is one of the ways by which one can tell the breed. He has not forgotten the old love he had for her years ago. He does not expect—he never expected—that she should return it. Numbers of those obliging people who go about the world telling the truth, assure him that he was married for his money. He accepts the fact meekly. For what else should she, the second cousin, only a few times removed, of an Earl, have married a creature with a plebeian name, an obscure origin, and the clumsy hands and feet of the People? The Exotic tells her dearest friends—and being such an eminently charming person, her dearest friends are quite unlimited in number—that she sacrificed herself in marriage to retrieve her papa's fortunes. Her dearest friends are quite enraptured at so rare and sweet a self-devotion, and say to each other on their way home that the Exotic is perfectly aware of the value of money, and had determined to marry the money-spinner when she was a child in the schoolroom. Such spiteful persons (ladies for the most part, who are probably jealous of the Exotic's fine drawing-room and her well-preserved beauty) add that it would have been better for the money-spinner if he had married upon five hundred a year and lived ever after in a suburban villa (once the height of his ambition). Under such circumstances, the ladies add, the Exotic would not have had time for her lung complaint, and would have stayed at home like other people and looked after her husband and children. Or would have stayed at home, and died. They are unable to determine which alternative would have contributed most to the money-spinner's happiness. He himself has an absolute devotion to his wife—and a corresponding belief in that lung complaint. He is too dull, perhaps, to form conceptions of what might have been. Or is too shrewd, despite his apathy, to think that his wife's affection would have grown better in a crude villa, perpetually odoriferous of cooking, than in her dainty flower-scented rooms in Park Lane. He is one of those slow-going people whose feelings do not change. Even now, when her name is mentioned, his dim eyes brighten, and he rouses from the apathy into which he is falling deeper and deeper every day. She is the only subject upon which he can talk with animation. The son of his old age is vacuous, idle, and

dissolute. There is but one interest in the world left clear and fresh and strong to him—and that is the wife who neglects him.

Every day, from the force of old habit, he drives to the City office in which years before he accumulated his fortune. The sons say it is perfectly ridiculous. Edith is not quite sure that it is not—well, a little common. But sometimes, when they want an extra cheque, they will consent, so beautiful is their humility and condescension, to drive to the office and ask him for it personally. The sons wonder what the deuce he does there all day. They themselves know nothing about making money—only spending it. And that they do to perfection. Edith says he grubs about the old Stocks and Shares, and she verily believes is quite fond of them. Perhaps he is. They have for him the attraction of old association. As he sits in the very elderly leather chair, which neither persuasion nor sarcasm can induce him to exchange for a better, it is possible that he recalls his youth. He recollects the old poverty, the bitter struggle, the keen ambition. He remembers the fierce incentive he had to work—the success coming slowly, slowly—and then bursting upon him like a great dawn. But Edith has come up, for a little money she says. Only people's ideas of what constitutes a *little* money differ very considerably. 'My dear papa,' she exclaims, with a tap on his shoulder, 'you have been dozing. And if you only knew how you have been snoring I verily believe you would never go to sleep again.'

One morning the valet comes to Edith with a scared face. 'My master,' says the man, 'is ill; and I think a doctor should be sent for at once.'

'Parker always loses his head in illness,' says Edith when the man has gone. 'Poor dear papa! I shall go up and see him, and then I can judge for myself. But I must say I hope to goodness he won't want the doctor; for who can be spared to fetch him this morning, with the dance coming off to-night and everything—I don't know.'

The sons do not know either. Nor the guests. No one knows. And so everyone continues breakfast with an assumption of cheerfulness, which is so very admirably done that it might almost be taken for the real thing. Edith sees papa, and does not think he is nearly so bad as Parker makes him out. He seems apathetic and heavy, and says very little. But that is all. (Edith has once been engaged to a physician, so she thinks she ought to know something of medicine.) Still, perhaps they will go round by the

doctor's, and ask him to call, during their morning drive. It is hundreds and thousands of miles out of their way, but it will never do to let poor old papa feel himself neglected. So after a little shopping at Shoolbred's, ices at Buzzard's, and a detour by way of Marshall & Snelgrove's, they call on the doctor. He has just gone out, so there is a short unavoidable delay in his coming. But that does not matter, because the money-spinner has died some hours before. Parker has been with him, and has bent over him with a polite affection not born entirely, perhaps, of handsome wages and unlimited perquisites. His master says very little. He has been in the habit of saying very little all his life. He asks that a photograph of his wife—a dressy photograph in a theatrical pose—may be turned so that he can see it from where he lies. Once or twice he murmurs her name. His intellect is quite clear. He does not ask to see her, but appears to recollect perfectly that she is far away from him, as she has been for more than half their married life. Once he asks for his youngest son, speaking of him by some baby name which has long since dropped into disuse. Parker explains to his master that Mr. Harold does not know his father is so ill, and has gone out riding. After that the money-spinner never speaks again. The monotonous ticking of the clock is the only sound that breaks the silence. The old man's withered hands move restlessly on the bedclothes. He turns his head once, slowly, on his pillow and so dies, the most desolate of God's creatures.

The evening party has to be put off, and Edith goes into very stylish mourning. The vacuous son consoles himself by marrying a barmaid. It is whispered that the Exotic will not long remain a widow, and Parker has found a situation in a titled family.

AT THE ICE-HILLS.

As a test for good robust nerves, the first attempt to descend a steep hill upon snowshoes is very excellent ; but let him who has thus tested his nerve-quality and found it satisfactory wait ; there is still a surer test : let him see whether he can deliberately hurl himself adown the '*facilis descensus*' of an ice-hill, without quailing ? If he can do this he may fairly claim to be a brave of the first water. I remember well seeing somewhere—I think it was in an old volume of *Punch*—the picture of two gentlemen of a bygone day engaged in an argument concerning the respective merits of the then newfangled train and the stage coach. One of the speakers is the *laudator temporis acti*—the late driver of a discarded coach ; the other a railway guard. The former is represented as saying something to this effect : 'As for haccidents, why, if the coach loses a wheel, or even topples over, why, *there yer are* ; but when one o' them bloomin' trains runs off the rails, why, where *are* yer ?'

This is very much how I regarded the respective dangers of snow-shoeing and ice-hilling, before attempting either. In flying a hill upon the shoes I should undoubtedly come to utter grief. Granted ; but then the snow is soft, you plunge head first into it, and, as the old coachman so eloquently expressed it, *there you are !* but in attempting the ice-hill, which is terribly steep and is negotiated upon a small iron sledge, the prospect is more fearsome, in that there is no soft white snow into which you may plunge and disappear until the rude laughter of the spectators shall have died away. On the contrary, there is nothing before you but a narrow lane of hard ice, bounded on either side by low walls of beaten snow, as hard as rock and studded with frequent lamp-posts designed specially for your ruin and exquisite discomfort. The tyro will assuredly come to grief at his first attempt—that fact may be regarded as a rule absolute—and then, to quote the old whip once more, 'where *are* yer ?'

Let me attempt to describe the ice-hills. Those of my readers who have visited St. Petersburg may possibly have enjoyed a drive over that portion of the environs of the Russian metropolis known as the 'Islands.' These islands are formed by the meander-

ings of the river Neva, which first divides the town into several portions, and then separating into four or five streams, like the outstretched fingers of a hand, converts these suburban districts into delightful islets, which are naturally much valued by the inhabitants as the park-lands of the capital. In a secluded corner of the island called Chrestoffsky there is a long avenue which, since the islands are not much used during winter as a fashionable driving resort, is yearly made over to the British colony as a site for their ice-hills. At either end of this avenue is erected, each winter, a tall platform, reached by three flights of stairs, and standing about as high as an average house. At the top of the platform is a room or landing, around the walls of which are placed comfortable seats for ladies and spectators. Sloping down from the landing is the ice-hill itself. The slope is first built of wood, and is then covered with thick squares of ice, which are frozen together and worked until their surface is as even as a mirror, and—well, there is no word to describe its slipperiness. On each side of the hill are bulwarks of about three feet in height; while, stretching away from the foot of the slope, along the avenue aforementioned, is the ‘run.’ This consists of no less smooth and slippery slabs of ice frozen together to form an unbroken stretch several hundred yards in length, reaching to the far end of the avenue, the width of this ice-lane being about two yards or a trifle over. At the end of the run is a second ice-hill, exactly similar to the first, but turned in the opposite direction, the level stretch at its foot running parallel with that of the first hill, and separated from the latter by a low bulwark of ice and beaten snow. The width of the avenue just suffices for the two ‘runs,’ one of which thus carries the sledge to the far end of the avenue, while the other brings it back to the starting-point. The hills are just about as steep as the roof of a house: I do not care to venture upon any more precise estimate, but any ice-hill student will bear me out when I say that no one can possibly want the roof of his house any steeper than the slope of an ice-hill; while if any one contends that the ice-hills are not so steep as the roof of a house, all I can say is, they are quite steep enough for *me*, thank you. I don’t care to have my ice-hills any steeper.

At the foot of each staircase stand half a dozen men, employed to carry sledges up to the platform at the top of the landing. The sledges themselves are the neatest little things possible, and are designed—as far as speed is concerned—to rival the very bolts of

Olympian Jove. They are made of iron, are very heavy for their size, and are ornamented with velvet cushions bearing the embroidered monograms and crests of their owners. They are of two kinds—the single and the double sledge, the former being about two and the latter about three feet in length. The double sledges are designed for taking ladies down the hill; the single ones are for the bachelor performer. In the middle of the platform is a square flooring of ice upon which the individual about to take the plunge places his sledge in order to perch himself upon it before going over the edge and abandoning himself to fate.

Before coming to the humiliating description of my first experience of the hills, I should mention that the ice-hills are supported by the annual subscriptions of members, the fee being about a guinea. Very few Russians belong, but there are many German and other foreign members, chiefly *attachés* from the various embassies, as well as residents. On two afternoons of the week a numerous and aristocratic company assembles in the room at the top of the hill. Here hot coffee is partaken of, and the proceedings are watched by the ladies; many of the less nervous of these themselves enjoying an occasional flight through space.

An extremely popular method of entertaining one's friends among English and German circles in St. Petersburg is to invite them to an 'ice-hill party.' On such occasions the hills, as well as the runs, are brilliantly illuminated with Bengal lights; Chinese and other lanterns being hung from the trees in the avenue and upon improvised lamp-posts all along the run. The scene is fairy-like and bewitchingly lovely when the weather is fine and there is rime upon the branches overhead. After a few hours' ice-hilling the guests drive away to supper—sometimes to the host's own house, sometimes to 'Samarcand,' a well-known suburban restaurant close to the hills, where may be heard the wonderful Russian gipsy singers whom every traveller in the country should make a point of visiting.

But I must return to my ice-hills. It was at such a party as that just described that I made my *début* as an ice-hillist. During the drive down, which was accomplished in an ordinary two-seated sledge drawn by a horse which whizzed us along the smooth track at a pace which laughed to scorn all such trifles as time and distance, my friend enlightened me as to the nature of ice-hilling, much as I have described it above.

'It's just tobogganing within limits, isn't it?' I said, after hearing the tale.

'Tobogganing?' repeated my friend with great scorn. 'Oh, yes, it's tobogganing of course, in a way, just as driving in a penny bus and going as we are going now are both driving; but you wait till you're on the hill, old chap, and if you ever tobogganed the pace you go down *it*, I'll eat'—I forget what he undertook to eat—his hat, probably, which was a fur cap and would certainly have choked him; but that is immaterial.

'Doesn't anyone get hurt?' I asked.

'Hurt? No!—knocked about a bit, of course, now and then, but not actually hurt. They would be if people were not very careful when there are beginners about. An old hand never starts off till the beginner has picked himself up and cleared out of the way.'

'Oh,' I said, 'indeed. And does a beginner *always* come to grief at first then?'

'Always,' said my friend. 'You don't mind, do you? It's the grandest fun in the world watching beginners. Why, several of our members only subscribe for the fun of coming down to see the new hands sprawl about.'

This was a pleasant prospect for me, anyhow. What a fool I was not to have come here beforehand to practise! I should not wonder if the party had been organised with *me* as the principal attraction. I suppose I should be the only beginner! What a disgusting position! If there is one thing in the world I do detest above others, it is making a fool of myself in public. What was to be done? Could I refuse to attempt the descent? I certainly would do so if it were possible.

However. I soon found that there was no escape for me in this direction. Clearly I was the *pièce de résistance* for the evening—that is, I and another wretched young man; for there *was* a second victim, to my great joy. We had been anxiously expected at the top of the hill—that I could see the moment I reached the platform. A sort of general beam of pleasure and relief overspread all faces at my arrival, which said as plain as words, 'Oh, here he is; now then, we shall have some sport!' There were scores of people, ladies and men, sitting and standing about; the ladies all dressed in warm furs, the men in long felt boots—*valinki* is the word in the vulgar tongue—and thick Norfolk jackets or other short coats, and fur caps. A huge urn, or samovar, filled with hot

mulled claret, steamed cheerfully upon a table in the corner. It was a pleasant picture, and I should have enjoyed it well enough but for the foreboding fear which sat, like some midnight horror, upon my chest.

'Now then, old chap; come on! we're all waiting for you. Got a sledge?' cried a certain officious person, a relative of my own, for whom I had, up to this moment, cherished some of the natural fondness of kinship, but whom from this time I began to loathe as I had never hitherto loathed man or beast (he being one of the latter).

I explained, with the best grace I could, that I desired to watch the experts awhile before endangering a life which, in a world where the good and great are so very scarce, was most precious.

'Endangering!' repeated the Beast, scornfully, 'there's no danger! Why look here.' Before the words were well out of his mouth he had taken his little sledge in his front paws, leaped head-first with it several feet down the hill, alighting in perfect safety in a recumbent position, and was whizzing down the incline, swift as a bolt and straight as an arrow. 'Don't you start off till I get back,' I heard him shout as he flew, 'I wouldn't miss your first shot for the world.' (Return in peace, Beast, and fear not; I am not in such a violent hurry to commit suicide!) For a minute his outstretched form could be seen shooting along the run—still perfectly safe and perfectly straight—then he passed out of sight in the distance: it was quite beautiful, and looked the most simple performance possible. Surely it could not, after all, be so very difficult? Apparently the only thing necessary to salvation was to keep one's head; that was all. Very well, I *would* keep my head: I would repeat to myself the advice of Horace (who might not have been quite so free with it, however, if he had tried his hand at the ice-hills): '*Aequam memento, rebus in arduis, Servare mentem.*' (Alas! I remembered a little Latin then: where is that Latin now?) Yes, I would keep cool. I also made another resolution: that the other victim, who was likewise by this time trembling at the brink of the dread abyss, should go down that hill before I did; ay, though I pushed him over the edge with my own hands. However, we tossed up and I won, as it happened, fairly; but I was quite capable, in my then frame of mind, of the basest deceptions, and should undoubtedly have cheated my fellow-victim, somehow or other, rather than 'go first.'

The individual whom I have designated 'the Beast' returned within three minutes after his departure, having traversed both the hills and the two long runs in that short space of time. We had tossed up during his absence, and Victim junior was now being screwed up to the necessary pitch of courage, or resolution, or desperation, or whatever the requisite quality may be called, sufficient to enable the poor wretch to abandon himself voluntarily to certain catastrophe—to be butchered, in fact, to make an ice-hill holiday. How thoughtless one is! Why could not I have realised beforehand that I was being led to this detestable ice-hill party like a lamb to the slaughter, for the express purpose of being induced to make an exhibition of myself? Why did I not stay at home and go to bed? I had never looked at the matter in this light: one never does look at things in the right light until too late! But everything is now ready for the first sacrifice: the victim is crowned and bound and prepared for the knife; in other words, he is placed upon his little velvet-cushioned sledge, and his hands encased in the clumsy-looking leather *rookavitz*, fingerless gloves used for steering the sledge. A dozen officious 'friends' (save the title!) stand around the poor wretch as he sits still a moment before taking the dreadful plunge—gracious heavens! and I am to be the next! Well, at all events I should have the advantage of first watching him, and perhaps gaining some useful experience before my turn came. Instruction of all kinds and much conflicting advice was showering down upon the unfortunate fellow's head in bewildering profusion. He was to touch the ice with one gloved hand whenever he desired to guide the sledge; if he felt himself gliding too much to one side he must gently touch the ice on the opposite quarter; to slacken speed he must dig both heels violently into the ice and cling to it with both hands as well; the less steering he did the straighter the sledge would run, &c., &c. Every individual present had some advice to give—infallible advice—but, if I may judge from my own experience, a few minutes later, the victim probably did not hear a single word, because there was a great booming sound going on in his head which entirely deprived him, for the time, of all discriminative consciousness: the only circumstance that he could fully realise being that he was just about to embark upon something quite as hazardous as the charge of the six hundred, but with none of the 'kudos' to follow, and that he wished to goodness he was safe at home in bed. At all events, such were my sentiments

shortly afterwards, and I suspect that his bore a family likeness to my own. One of the friends above mentioned was by this time holding on to the back of the victim's sledge in order to give it the advantage of at least starting upon its course in the way it should go. Alas! poor victim; he did not long remain in the narrow path; on the contrary, he went astray into the other road, whose end is grief and tribulation and lamp-posts—ay, and the laughter of friends.

At last the fatal moment arrived, and Victim junior was launched into space. . . .

The next few events followed one another with such exceeding rapidity that it is extremely difficult to describe them, and the reader must kindly bear in mind that the action was almost instantaneous, and did not take place at the limping pace at which my halting pen is compelled to proceed in attempting to accurately describe it. First of all, then, the sledge with its hapless burden darted straight down the very centre of the hill—thanks, so far, to the accurate start given to it by the friend at the top. Then, to my horror I observed it—as though struck by a sudden idea—head straight for the side of the incline, dash itself violently against the bulwark, and turn sharp round, so that the ribald spectators beheld the agonised face of Victim junior instead of the back of his head: truly it was a shocking sight! The rest of the descent was accomplished by that miserable man backwards: he was clinging convulsively with both hands to the sides of the sledge, and his countenance was as the face of those who feel that their last moment has arrived.

After its first fell swoop to the right, the sledge never travelled another inch in a straight line. It dashed from one side of the hill to the other with inconceivable rapidity, and back again; but as there was nothing to arrest its progress upon the hill itself, the inevitable climax was reserved for consummation upon the straight run at its foot. Once at the bottom of the hill the little sledge seemed to go absolutely crazy; it dashed itself against the ridge of hard snow on the left, carrying away a lamp-post and two Chinese lanterns; then it flew with unerring precision straight into a small tree on the opposite side, causing the lanterns with which the latter was burdened to swing as though infected with its own madness, two of them catching fire with the oscillation, and immediately burning themselves up. This was its last effort, for flying off at a tangent from the tree on the right, it took the

barrier at a bound, carrying my fellow-victim with it, and committed suicide in the deep snow on the far side of the second run. As for its late passenger—the boy—oh! where was he? . . . Ask of the Chinese lanterns (and other relics of his journey), which with fragments strewed the way! He was lost sight of for some little while; the fact being that he had stuck manfully to his ship until her last wild leap had dissolved the partnership, and the two—ship and passenger—had then raced side by side through the air, the victim arriving first by a short head; this lead he had, however, augmented by turning twice head over heels, on reaching *terra firma*, while the sledge remained imbedded in the deep snow at the spot where it first touched ground.

Apparently the *profanum vulgus* at the top of the hill took it for granted that their victim was not seriously damaged. It is to be hoped that this was their conviction; for their laughter was of the most boisterous description. I am bound to say that, standing as I then stood upon the very brink of an abyss into which one victim had already been cast, and into which I was myself so soon to be hurled after him, I was not, personally, in the mood for mirth. I felt shocked at the levity of the profane crowd. As for the subject of their ribald merriment, though extremely sorry for his misfortunes, I could not help hoping that he had broken a couple of legs or so, or done himself some equally serious injury, in order to provide me with an adequate excuse for declining to submit myself to the certainty of a similar fate; but alas! he reappeared all too quickly upon the scene, and apparently not much the worse. I must say I *did* feel a little annoyed with the fellow for not being damaged; it was mean of him; he might have limped a bit, or shed a little blood, at least, instead of returning so brutally free of injury. He had emerged from his snow grave, picked himself up, collected his sledge and other appurtenances, and was now walking slowly back along the run, amid the mingled laughter and applause of the assembled multitude. The young idiot took his cap off, as though he were a great batsman returning to the pavilion after making a 'century' in a classic cricket match! I have never cared for that young fellow since. He had the effrontery to declare that he was not hurt a bit and had rather enjoyed the treat! He said the motion was delightful. 'What about the collision with trees and lamp-posts,' I asked, 'was that delightful too?' He explained that he had only collided, personally, with one lamp-post, which caught him in the back and was

sent flying for its pains (he seemed rather proud of this); his sledge had borne all the rest of the knocks, he said. He was good enough to add that it was now my turn, and that he fancied the spectacle would more than repay him for any slight inconveniences that he had suffered, such as colliding with birch-trees and being encircled with a ring of blazing Chinese lanterns as he spun round and round in that devil's delight of his. Other voices chimed in, and pointed out that I really *must* go now! There was nothing for it—the die was cast; with the Trump of Doom ringing in my ears I sat down on the sledge.

'Now, are you quite sure you understand?—press your *right* hand on the ice if you want to go to the right and *vice versa*,' said my friend. 'Don't be alarmed—there's no danger; only keep your head and don't get flurried!'

'But if the sledge turns sharp round, as it did with the other fellow?' I asked.

'Why, it's just as easy to go down backwards as it is forwards,' said another spectator; 'if you'll wait till I come back I'll show you.'

So saying he deliberately sat down backwards upon his sledge, and then and there launched himself in that position down the hill. I expected to see the rash creature hurled instantly to destruction; but instead of that he glided down with perfect ease and precision, keeping with mathematical accuracy to the very centre of the narrow track, and scarcely requiring to guide his sledge, though he could not, of course, see where he was going—at least I had not observed that he was accommodated with eyes at the back of his head. The sight refreshed and encouraged me. Why, after all, should I not be able to do this thing? It looked easy enough. Now then, I said to myself, *aequamemento* . . . the moment had arrived! . . . I was being straightened preparatory to being shoved off—shoved off into the bottomless abyss! . . . 'Are you ready?'—the words sounded a great way off. Yes, I was ready. 'Away you go, then!'

The first sensation was a horrible sickening one. My heart seemed to jump into my mouth as the sledge tipped over the edge and started off upon its lightning-like career. *Aequamemento, aequamemento!* I repeated to myself; keep cool! The sledge, wonderful to relate, preserved at first an absolutely straight line, so well had I been started and so still did I sit. Right down the very middle of the hill we sped, like a flash, amid cheers and

shouts of encouragement from above. After the first sickening gulp the sensation was not unpleasant; but the speed was terrific. I felt that my *aequam memento* would not save me if the sledge diverged but a hair's breadth from its course. I should lose my head—I was losing it now. . . . I could feel it going; the bottom of the hill was passed in safety, but my nerves were failing—the least hitch and I was doomed to disaster. . . . Alas! that disaster came all too soon. Hardly was the foot of the hill passed in safety when the sledge, to gain some private end (probably that of getting rid of its encumbrance), suddenly darted violently to the left. I plumped my hand down on the right—*aequam memento*—crash! we went against the side, and a lamp-post went by the board; but I was not unshipped yet; I was whizzing along backwards now, in what direction I could not tell; but the pace was terrific. Keep cool—keep cool! I whispered; *aequam mem*—crash! smash! bang!—it was the climax! Sparks and lights seemed to fly around me on all sides; I was the plaything of all the spirits of destruction and chaos! . . . a moment or two or crashes, then a period of wild whizzing round and round, in a sitting position, upon the ice, and then all was still.

Where was I, and where was my sledge? Well, apparently I was in the middle of the second run, on the bare ice, with a Chinese lantern in my lap and another entangled with my left foot. Lamp-posts were scattered over both runs in reckless profusion, and the bough of a tree lay across the first run. For twenty yards or so there was snow—much snow—scattered over the track; the place looked as if a battle had been fought there; but where was my sledge, and what was that bedlam of noise from the top of the hill? . . . Be still, Oh, heart! it is but the unfeeling laughter of thy friends that rises upon the midnight air. I have made a fool of myself; of that there can be no reasonable doubt; but I am unhurt. *How* I came to be unhurt I neither do, nor did, nor ever shall comprehend; for I felt that I ought to be very much hurt indeed. But where *was* my sledge all this time? surely it could not be yonder object a hundred yards further on, like a little black speck in the distance? It was indeed, though. It had got rid of me, happily, comparatively early in its mad career and had dashed on, overturning lamp-posts and strewing the course with Chinese lanterns as it sped, until brought to its senses by colliding with a substantial tree-trunk, and there it lay upside-down, the very type of ruin and destruction!

Slowly and sadly I picked my way back, while hired menials hastened out with brooms to clear away the *débris*.

Such was my first attempt to learn the mysteries of ice-hilling. My friends assured me that I had shown great promise and would soon acquire proficiency. In vain I urged that proficiency would arrive only when the breath had finally left my tortured body, if it was to be attained in the expensive manner just experienced by me. However, I tried again and yet again, and many times, and steadily improved, though at the expense of a vast number of Chinese lanterns; and at last I accomplished the whole length of the run in safety, reaching the very end without a catastrophe. It was a proud moment, and from this time I became the wildest of enthusiasts over the delights of ice-hilling. I soon learned to go down kneeling and lying, as easily as sitting, and could even take a lady down safely after a day or two of steady practice, when I found one bold enough to trust herself to my 'prentice hand. When a lady is taken down the larger sledge is used; the gentleman sits in front, while the lady kneels behind him, resting her hands upon his shoulders. The art of descending backwards, which looks so hopelessly difficult at first sight, is easily acquired; the secret being, simply to keep one's gaze firmly fixed upon the top of the hill, or upon the centre of the track, and not to permit the sledge to deviate from that centre by a single hair's breadth. 'Busses,' by which term is meant a collection of six, or eight, or any number of sledges whose occupants, all kneeling either backwards or forwards, cling on to one another as best they can, form perhaps the most amusing of all the methods of flying the hill. The speed attained by one of these busses is tremendous, owing, of course, to the extra impetus gained by the weight of a large number of heavy sledges massed together. The foremost sledge, which is generally occupied by an experienced ice-hiller kneeling backwards, steers the bus. When a bus comes to grief it is grief indeed, and there is much work after such a calamity for the employés whose duty it is to clear away scattered snow, ill-used lanterns, and *débris* generally. During a considerable experience of the 'hills,' I have never witnessed a single accident. The spills are of course numerous, and, until one is accustomed to them, terrible to witness; but it is principally the protruding runners of the iron sledges that get the hard knocks, and the lamp-posts are the chief sufferers. I have said that I soon became one of the most enthusiastic of the devotees of the ice-hills: I may add that

I am so still, and that I know of scarcely any amusement so fascinating and so exhilarating as this : the exercise is glorious ; the excitement quite sufficient to prevent the sameness of the occupation becoming wearisome ; and on the whole I may safely affirm that ice-hilling is quite one of the most delightful and characteristic of the pastimes to be enjoyed in the country of the Tsar.

But for all that, and in spite of the many happy hours since spent in atoning for the first hour of dread, the memory of that horrible moment when—having watched my fellow-victim's terrible fate—I sat balanced over the edge of the dreadful abyss, knowing that I was to be despatched, next instant, on a lightning-like tour which could only end in a giddy dance with lamp-posts and Chinese lanterns for partners, is still powerful enough to send a chill of horror through me ; and I sometimes wonder that I did not turn and run, jump into the first vehicle I saw, drive straight up to town and retire to bed, rather than face the ordeal of that first awful, sickening plunge into space.

LITT'LA-IZA.

SHE had been christened 'Eliza Emily Liversuch.' But, except for the fact that she was made an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven—a very important fact for one who was destined to possess nothing on earth—her christening had been in vain. No one ever called her by her baptismal name. She was only 'Little 'Liza,' or as more commonly pronounced by those about her, 'Litt'la-iza.'

She was fortunate in receiving the privilege of a christening at all. In that respect she was better off than the babies that came after; in all other respects they had the advantage. But at the time that her mother took her to the font she was the only child, and Mrs. Liversuch was proud of her new dignity, and prepared to let Eliza Emily start fair in the race of life. However, before very long it became clear that, through somebody's fault, certainly not her own, Litt'la-iza was handicapped. It was not only that she was not able to run the course; it became doubtful if she could walk it.

When Tommy was born she could only crawl, and when Billy arrived she was crawling still. When Tommy was capable of maintaining the perpendicular for a considerable length of time without endangering his nose, Mrs. Liversuch began to wonder seriously at Litt'la-iza's lack of ambition. One day she carried her to the London Hospital. When she returned it was with the knowledge that Litt'la-iza could never be expected to walk. Her legs were paralysed.

Perhaps Litt'la-iza had suspected it all along, and that was why her efforts to 'feel her legs' had been so feeble, and why when she had toppled over directly she started to obtain the lump of sugar held at a distance of three-quarters of a yard, she promptly abandoned all methods of locomotion save that which made the danger of a fall impossible. Perhaps, too, that was why she was of such a serious disposition. Mrs. Liversuch thought it was only because girls were by nature quieter than boys, that while the latter cried and quarrelled and scratched each other, and clamoured to be taken up at all sorts of inconvenient minutes, their sister was content to sit on the floor and play with the coals, and would remain for hours where she had been placed, staring before her with wide, pensive eyes. When she discovered the truth the mother

was very disappointed. She was fonder of girls than boys, and she had been proud of her first-born. She hated having to tell her neighbours, when they remarked on the child's backwardness, that Litt'la-iza would never be anything but a burden to her. If she had had another daughter she might have forgiven Litt'la-iza for not being a credit to her, but all the subsequent children were boys. She was not unkind to Litt'la-iza, but she seemed to have lost interest in her. Besides, the others asserted their claims on her attention, whereas the cripple child had an instinct for patient submission.

As time went on, and the children grew plentiful in proportion as work and food grew scarce, it was generally understood that if anyone had less to eat than the others it must be Litt'la-iza. The boys would have to be strong and go to school and earn their livings; it didn't matter so much about poor Litt'la-iza, who was no credit to her food even when she had it, but remained pale and thin and tiny.

From the day that her mother brought her back from the hospital Litt'la-iza did not go out of doors. The baby was too heavy to carry, so when anyone went in the perambulator it was he, and as long as there was a perambulator there was always a baby to occupy it. At last the perambulator was sold. Mrs. Liversuch was in want of money, and moreover, she never found time now to go out and wheel the children. They had to take the air in the gutter. Litt'la-iza would sit indoors, and hold the latest baby in her weak arms while the mother worked. At last adverse circumstances compelled the family to move. On this occasion Litt'la-iza's father carried her (and the kitchen fender) through the streets of Whitechapel. It being winter and rainy weather she was cold and wretched. If she had had any desires before to be sometimes in the open air this checked them. The next move they made was effected without the necessity of going out of doors. The family went a flight higher, and so saved half a crown a week.

Mr. Liversuch was a tailor by trade. For an insignificant wage he ran up the legs of several pairs of trousers daily. But whether because there was a decrease in the number of those gentlemen who purchase ready-made clothing, or for some other reason, Mr. Liversuch began to complain that work was slack. Sometimes even, when he brought home the trousers they were flung, till wanted, over shivering barelegged children who had

neither food nor clothing. There were times, too, when the trousers were not forthcoming. Then Mr. Liversuch, unable to contemplate the miseries of his family, or to bear the complaining of his wife, would go out and walk the streets till night.

It was thus he fell into bad habits. He used to say he was looking for work, but apparently work was an accomplished player at the game of hide and seek. When by any chance he found it, his wife and children had cause to regret it. The money went in drink. Mrs. Liversuch managed to earn a little, and the eldest boy was sent out to work. So they subsisted somehow.

Litt'la-iza was now twelve years old, a surprising age for her to have attained to under the circumstances. She was a queer, wizened, ugly little creature, with eyes at once shrewd and gentle, and a shock of unkempt yellow hair. She could not read or write, and she had seen nothing of the world; yet her brain had developed in some sort of way, and she had ideas. There was one thing of which Litt'la-iza was capable by nature and that was love. She had probably never heard this word, and she could certainly not have defined the sentiment, and yet she loved in a deep, silent, undemonstrative way. She loved and pitied her drunken father, she loved the mother who neglected her, she loved the dirty, quarrelsome little boys, her brothers, and she loved God.

I do not know how she managed to do this last, for no one had ever told her anything about Him; there was little enough in her squalid home to suggest Him to her; and she could seldom obtain even a peep at the sky. But He can reveal Himself without the aid of His feeble instruments, and many hold the hem of His garment ignorant of the Nature of Him against whom they press. At any rate Litt'la-iza was conscious that she had a Friend, and she talked to Him and told Him the thoughts of her heart, though she did not call Him by any name. And her religion took the form of sacrifice. The crowning act of her silent life was heroic; that is why it is chronicled here.

It was on Litt'la-iza's birthday that the family again moved. That is to say, they gave up the back room and all went into the front one. The furniture of the sitting-room, consisting of a chair and a three-legged table, was carried in by Mrs. Liversuch. Sundry children followed bearing the cooking utensils—a saucepan and a frying-pan, two cups and a plate, and the family tea-pot, the spout of which got knocked off in the transit.

Litt'la-iza took no part in this flitting. She was in the bedroom

already. She had grown too feeble of late to help herself much, and her mother being too busy to attend to the girl's toilet every day, and having nothing but a shawl to dress her in when she was up, frequently let her remain in bed. Sometimes Litt'la-iza slept then. At night the snores and kicking of her young brothers, who shared the bed with her, made slumber a difficult matter.

'Is that all?' she inquired in her shrill little voice when the articles from the next room had been satisfactorily disposed.

Mrs. Liversuch nodded. She had seated herself on the rickety chair. The children had swarmed up on the bed.

'There ain't nothink more,' said Mrs. Liversuch.

'Lor!' said Litt'la-iza. But the ejaculation was expressive.

'The sofy?' she asked presently.

'Put away.'

'Where'll you sleep?'

Mrs. Liversuch shrugged her shoulders.

'We'll have to manage somehow,' she said. She had reached that pitch of despair that nothing seemed to disturb her very much. 'There's the floor. And I s'pose you can git another child in that bed.'

Litt'la-iza pulled her sharp chin.

'Yes,' she said; 'Ben 'ld curl up comfortable.'

She was a philosophic person, Litt'la-iza. She had no conception that there was such a thing as luxury. Hunger and cold and pain and weariness seemed to her as essential to human existence as breathing. Though she was neglected no one was actively unkind to her. Perhaps if she had reasoned about such things she would have said she was not *unhappy*. As for happiness, Litt'la-iza looked not for it in this life, for the simple reason that she knew nothing whatever about it. She took things as they came. As the bed was always crowded it was not worth excluding Ben because he would make one more. 'Yes,' she repeated; 'Ben 'ld curl up comfortable.' And she added pensively, but not in any way complainingly, and rather as if she were speaking of some other person, 'Seems a pity me lumberin' of it, don't it?'

'It can't be helped,' said Mrs. Liversuch. 'But I dunno,' she added wearily, 'how we are going to manage later on.'

'I don't, neither,' said Litt'la-iza.

The facts of her existence were such that this poor little cripple could not pretend to ignorance of those stern realities of life from

the knowledge of which happier maidens are jealously guarded. Then she changed the subject.

'Ain't there any dinner?' she asked.

Mrs. Liversuch awoke from a reverie.

'There's a bit of bread and drippin',' she said. 'I dropped it in the saucepan. Give us the knife, Walter.'

The small youth thus addressed produced a knife from somewhere. The lid of the saucepan was taken off, and a piece of stale bread disclosed. The dripping to which allusion had been made was a dark fatty substance which had already imparted a greasy appearance to the crust against which it had been nestling in the saucepan.

The eager children crowded round their mother. She cut a few thick slices and smeared the dripping over them. Grimy hands were stretched out, and there was a contented sound of munching.

'Liza?' inquired her mother, the knife held interrogatively towards her.

'No,' said Litt'la-iza, 'I ain't hungry.'

She often said that at meal times. Sometimes it was the truth and sometimes it was not. She had certainly accustomed herself to do with a minimum of food, and could well have been training for a fasting prodigy. A drink of water seemed to make a satisfactory meal for poor Litt'la-iza. When she said, 'I ain't hungry,' no one attempted to urge, even if her tone were wistful, her to eat. All were too glad to have the chance of another bite of bread and butter; and sometimes when Litt'la-iza accepted a slice it was only to hold it to one little mouth after another with a shrill 'Ave a bite?' which was always unhesitatingly answered without the aid of words. And no one realised that Litt'la-iza was dying, before her time, of slow starvation.

Dying before her time—and yet she lived too long, it would seem. The new arrangement, by which Litt'la-iza had more of the society of her family than she had formerly enjoyed, certainly helped her on the downward way. She was used to breathing a vitiated atmosphere, but seven in a room during summer weather made even her well-trained lungs sometimes cry out for a little oxygen, though she did not understand what it was that they wanted, and why at night she longed to fling out her weak arms panting. If she had done so she would have disturbed her bed-fellows, and therefore she lay still and suffered.

In the daytime, however, she had still some hours of comparative solitude, for such of the young ones as had clothes of any description went to the ragged school, or played in the gutter. Mrs. Liversuch never went outside, but she sometimes gossiped on the landing or at the street-door. Mr. Liversuch, other work still eluding him, had parted with his machine and gone tramping. It was probable he would be away during the time of harvesting and hopping.

One day a neighbour dropped in on Mrs. Liversuch. She was the woman from downstairs, who had promised to aid Mrs. Liversuch in time of need. She was an untidy, pleasant-faced woman, with a practical bent of mind.

There was no one in the room but Litt'la-iza, who was lying with her eyes closed, so that they thought she was asleep, though they would not have troubled themselves in any case about her presence. Mrs. Hobbes was talking about her daughter who had just got married, an event that is of importance in all ranks of society, though in the East End mothers get their daughters 'off their hands' with less difficulty than do those of the respectable West.

'I miss her,' said Mrs. Hobbes; 'daughters is companionabler than sons. You ain't never 'ad one, 'ave yer?'

'Only her,' Mrs. Liversuch pointed to the bed. 'She don't 'ardly count.'

The small figure in the tattered shawl, who lay outside the equally tattered coverlid, stirred slightly; the little grey face, which was so weird and ugly and shrunken, quivered. She had known all along that she didn't 'ardly count,' and yet there was still enough life in her to make it grievous to hear these words.

'P'raps this'll be a girl, my dear,' said Mrs. Hobbes soothingly.

'P'raps so,' said Mrs. Liversuch. And then she sighed heavily. 'Oh dear,' she said, 'I don't see how I'm to manage. There ain't a thing in the place, and poor Litt'la-iza's not fit to be moved.'

'She'll have to be,' said the other woman. 'You owes yourself a dooty. Besides, you'll want the child to be strong.'

'Oh dear, yes,' said Mrs. Liversuch with energy. 'It's bad enough havin' 'em at all, and 'Enery not earnin'. I couldn't abear to have another cripple.'

'No; poor Litt'la-iza's enough,' said Mrs. Hobbes.

Then she walked round to the bed and regarded the child.

'I don't think she'll last,' she said, in a stage whisper. 'Poor little crittur,' she added, not ungently. 'Her life ain't much value to her. It'll be a mercy when she goes.'

'Yet I'd miss her,' said Mrs. Liversuch, who had followed her friend. 'She's 'elpless. She can't even do mendin' or nothin' now. But she's willin'. And she's my own child, yer see, Mrs. Hobbes. A mother's a mother.'

At these words two tears crept from under Litt'la-iza's closed lids, and trickled down her cheeks. Neither of the women observed them. Mrs. Hobbes had turned to go outside, and Mrs. Liversuch accompanied her to the door.

Not long afterwards Mrs. Liversuch was sitting on the rickety chair, with her hands clasped on her lap and her eyes fixed in dreary contemplation of nothingness, when the thin piping voice of Litt'la-iza roused her. She turned and looked at her daughter.

Yes, 'Liza.'

'Do dyin' hurt?'

'I don't—know. It depends. What for do you ask?'

'I shouldn't wonder but that I died afore long.'

'Why, 'Liza? You don't feel badder, do yer?'

Mrs. Liversuch rose and came to her side.

'There don't seem much strength left to me. . . . I'm sorry I been 'elpless, mother.'

'Oh, 'Liza,' said her mother, with sudden and unwonted tenderness, the crushed maternal instinct asserting itself for a moment, 'it weren't *your* fault; *you* couldn't 'elp it.'

'No,' said 'Liza sadly, 'I couldn't 'elp it. I done my best.'

There was a short silence.

'Do yer know when dyin' comes on?' 'Liza asked then.

'I—don't know, 'Liza,' said Mrs. Liversuch, looking away.

'Cause,' said Litt'la-iza, 'if I felt mine a-comin', I—I sort o' fancy I'd like to be took up, and set on a chair—and—and die like other folk.'

'But, 'Liza, when people are ill they go to bed. Most of 'em dies there.'

'Do they now? . . . Well, p'raps they ain't been there in their beds so long as me. . . . I—I'd like to be took up.' She began to fidget with her shawl. 'Yer see,' she said hesitatingly, 'it 'ld be awkward if anyone else was took ill, now, wouldn't it?'

'Liza was not used to subterfuge. Something like a blush spread over the ashen face.

'Liza,' said her mother, 'you heerd—what Mrs. Hobbes was sayin'!'

'Liza was silent.

'Did yer?'

'I sort—o' fancied—she said—you might be wantin' this 'ere bed.'

'Oh, 'Liza!' Mrs. Liversuch burst into tears. 'To think as you should ha' heerd! Don't you go havin' them thoughts. No, 'Liza! I ain't goin' to turn you off, not for nothin'! Oh, I hope I ain't been 'ard on yer. 'Liza, there's been so many to see to. And if you was 'elpless, you couldn't help it.'

'No,' said Litt'la-iza again, 'I couldn't 'elp it.'

'You ain't been un'appy, 'Liza, 'ave yer? Say you ain't. I never see a child o' mine die afore. If we 'adn't fell on bad times you might 'ave 'ad things better. Say you ain't been un'appy, 'Liza.'

Litt'la-iza turned her strange unchildlike eyes on her mother. It seemed a wonderful thing that anyone could speak to her in that tone. It thrilled her with a hitherto unknown sensation. She put out a claw-like hand and touched her mother's cheek.

But she did not answer her question. Something in her little throat prevented any attempt at utterance. When she did speak it was only to say softly—

'I loves yer.'

'Liza,' said her mother, in a choked voice, 'don't you say no more about gettin' out o' that bed. You ain't fit. And it 'ld lie on my mind if I moved yer. On that bed you stays comfortable for the rest o' yer days.'

'Well,' said Litt'la-iza to herself, 'I must 'urry up and die. Praps the baby 'll be crippley too. Mrs. Hobbes said so. I couldn't abear that the baby 'ld be crippley. I must 'urry up and die.'

This thought having taken possession of her mind occupied it to the exclusion of all else. She laid the matter before her Friend again and again, using the same form so constantly that at last it became an involuntary expression.

'I wouldn't be in an 'urry if it weren't acause of that. It ain't as I special wants to die. But please let me go afore the baby comes, in case it should be crippley.'

During the few days that followed her talk with Mrs. Liversuch,

the latter treated her with an unusual kindness and consideration, but it was evident that no care could save Litt'la-iza now. She was surely sinking. She refused food, and she had become so very thin that it was possible to count her bones. So weak was she, too, that she could hardly move in bed. Her legs, of course, had always been useless, but she had been able to sit up and to employ her hands. Moreover, she could scarcely speak. The shrill unmusical voice was only a whisper. Fortunately during those hot summer days the children were very little indoors, and Mrs. Liversuch had commanded that they should sleep on the floor, only Ben sharing poor Litt'la-iza's bed.

The child's mind shared with her body in its failing power, but the dominant thought was persistent. Often her lips moved though no sound issued from them.

'Please let me go afore the baby comes, in case it should be crippley.'

On the fourth day she seemed suddenly to rally. She became more conscious of what was going on around her. Mrs. Hobbes, who had been summoned upstairs, came and looked at her.

'You'd best move this child, my dear,' she said.

'No,' said Mrs. Liversuch firmly. 'I ain't a goin' to, and I forbids you to touch her. Poor Litt'la-iza, let her die comfortable, at any rate.'

'I think you're behavin' foolish,' said Mrs. Hobbes, keeping her temper with difficulty.

'I ain't in a state to quarrel about it,' said poor Mrs. Liversuch, 'but whatever comes to me, there she stays.'

Litt'la-iza heard. They would not move her. She opened her weary eyes. They rested for a moment on her mother's white suffering face. She understood.

There was only one thing to be done. Could she do it?

'I ain't died,' she said to herself, 'and p'raps the baby 'll be crippley.'

She closed her eyes again. The perspiration broke out on her face. She clenched her little hands. From the bed to the ground was a drop of about two feet.

She was lying somewhat near the edge of the bed. She stretched out a feeble arm to calculate the distance.

Mrs. Hobbes had gone back to Mrs. Liversuch, and no one was looking at her. She made a supreme effort, and dragged herself to one side.

'Gracious!' cried Mrs. Liversuch, 'the child's fallen out of bed. Oh, poor Litt'la-iza! Poor Litt'la-iza!'

Mrs. Hobbes ran to pick her up.

'It's providential,' she exclaimed.

'Poor Litt'la-iza!' said her mother again.

'Let me set her on this cheer,' said Mrs. Hobbes, who had no intention of being inhuman, but whose professional instincts were strong. 'I'll look to her by-and-by.'

No one could attend to her for some little time. When Mrs. Hobbes at length went to her she was dead.

The last sound of which Litt'la-iza had been conscious was the cry of the baby girl to whom she had given a chance to start fair.

HUMOURS OF RUSTIC PSALMODY.

THACKERAY's celebrated Duke, who never went to church in town, but used to sing the hymns in the family pew in the country with fine effect, must have been a man of great moral courage. Perhaps he had discriminating tastes, and found in the choir gallery that amusement which in the city he preferred to draw from the more legitimate sources of recreation. Even Samuel Pepys, who chuckled at the red-vested fiddlers in Westminster Abbey, and got 'mighty sport' from the clerk who sung out of tune, thought it a jest to hear 'the clerk begin the 25th Psalm, which hath a proper tune to it, and then the 116th, which cannot be sung to that tune;' and if the church were the place in which to look for jests, many would no doubt have found excellent sport in the good old times. It is the fashion nowadays to deplore the disappearance of the village band, the fiddles and the viols, the flutes and the clarionets, the bassoons and the horns, that occupied the choir galleries of the country's Sleepy Hollows. We are told that it was all a sad mistake to let these time-honoured instruments go before the advance of the 'gusty organ,' as Leigh Hunt calls it, and the wheezing harmonium. The playing, it is admitted, was not very good, the instruments were as frequently out of tune as the vocalists were out of breath, and as often as not there was more quarrelling than harmony among the performers. But an institution should be improved, not abolished; and whereas formerly every little village had its half-dozen men who could play on one instrument or other, now there are only half a dozen boys who can manage the concertina. Well, it is a pity, no doubt.

There are compensations, however. If we have not heard with our own ears, our fathers have certainly declared unto us the wonderful things that were done of old time in the village choir gallery. Our forefathers found a weekly relief from the Calvinistic strait-waistcoat in what they called 'fuguings' tunes, a fugue being defined by one of their own wits as a musical composition the various 'parts' of which 'run away' from each other, while

the hearer runs away from them all! An obscure poetaster put it in a more kindly way when he said:

A fugue let loose cheers up the place,
With bass and tenor, alto, air,
The parts strike in with measured grace,
And something sweet is everywhere.

The sweetness would of course depend upon circumstances; but it may be admitted without any reserve that if the fuguing tunes of the old psalmody days were again 'let loose,' a good many meeting-houses would be 'cheered up' in a way to delight the heart of even a nineteenth-century Pepys.

The unusual effect of the successive 'piling up' of lines and phrases as they were repeated *ad libitum* with ever-increasing force was probably exhilarating if not devotional—as when Hodge set himself to sing the praises of 'dra-gons stout and strong,' or to tell how 'some put their trust in charr'ots and some in 'orses,' and so on. But the verbal effect was occasionally quite startling, though it may be doubted if the simple souls who sang ever saw the absurdity. A congregation would be heard lustily proclaiming their defiance of the Decalogue in 'I love to steal—I love to steal,' while all they meant to do was 'to steal awhile away' to some imaginary realm of spiritual blessedness. 'Stir up this stu—stir up this stu' was only the 'fuguing' form of 'Stir up this stupid heart to pray.' And so with 'And take thy pil—and take thy pilgrim home;' 'My poor pol—my poor pol—my poor polluted heart;' 'And more eggs—more eggs—and more exalt our joys;' 'I love thee bet—I love thee better than before;' 'And catch the flee—and catch the fleeting hour,' and many more entertaining instances of perverted sense in song. Two trebles sang, 'And learn to kiss;' two trebles and alto, 'And learn to kiss;' two trebles, alto and tenor, 'And learn to kiss;' bass solus, 'the rod.'

With reverence let the saints appear
And bow before the Lord.

became 'And bow—wow—wow, And bow—ow—ow,' and so on until treble, alto, tenor and bass (*base* enough in all conscience!) had bow-wowed themselves hoarse and perceptibly apoplectic. The burly village butcher, sawing away at his fiddle all the time, would declare in a mighty solo, 'I am Jo—Jo—Joseph,' and having reiterated this interesting information four or five times, would inquire with equal pertinacity, 'Doth my fa—a—u—ther yet

live?' The story has been told of an Oxford man reading in the country for his 'little go,' and being saluted with the changes, 'cannot pluck me—cannot pluck me—cannot pluck me from Thy hand,' he, like a Virgilian hero, drew from the words a propitious omen, whether realised or no the story-teller deponeth not.

But the climax of sentiment and scientific singing was reached when the rustic vocalists took up a verse like this in the 133rd Psalm :

True love is like that precious oil,
Which, poured on Aaron's head,
Ran down his beard, and o'er his robes
Its costly moisture shed.

One can understand why Bishop Seabury's sympathies were excited for poor Aaron to the extent of fears that he would not have a hair left, when he tells us that he heard a country choir tearing the bearded biblical hero to pieces after the following fashion—

Its costly moist—ran down his beard—
Ure beard—his—beard—his—shed—
Ran down his beard—his—down his robes—
Its costly moist—his beard—ure shed—
His cost—ure robes—his robes—he shed—
I—t—s co—s—t—l—y moist—ure shed.

No wonder that when the fuguing tunes took possession of the Puritan churches of New England the clergymen began to consult their concordances in a hunt for scripture texts to hurl at the heads of the innovators. One divine succeeded in finding a motto for his purpose in 'The songs of the temple shall be turned into howling,' and another preached to his people from the words, 'Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.'

Evidently there were a good many who sympathised with the man who hung two dead cats over the door of the reputed father of fuguing tunes, to indicate his opinion of his caterwauling. The Scotch ministers had the most forcible way of keeping the 'repeat' tunes out of the churches. The huge pulpit Bible would come whack down on the precentor's head if he dared to introduce any such innovation, and one parson is known to have carried away a handful of the man of music's locks as he roared, 'Stop, Dauvit, stop! when the Lord repeats we'll repeat too, but not till then.'

But assuredly King David had other and better reasons for being dissatisfied with the manner of performing his psalms. It was written of Sir Richard Blackmore's metrical version of the Psalter—

He took his muse at once, and dipp'd her
Full in the middle of the Scripture;
What wonders there the man grown old did !
Sternhold himself he out-Sternhold-ed.

I have never seen Sir Richard's 'travails in poesy,' but if he really succeeded in out-Sternholding Sternhold, his Psalter must be a good deal more diverting than the latest productions of the 'new humour' school. We have it on the authority of Strype that 'the Groom of His Majesty's robes' composed his first psalms 'for his own godly solace.' *Chacun à son goût.* To our present-day finical tastes there does not seem to be much 'godly solace' in that 'bridegroom ready trimmed' over which Warton exercised himself, nor in such doggerel as this, which is only a specimen of the kind of thing that comforted our ancestors on their day of rest :

Why dost withdraw Thy hand aback
And place it in Thy lappe ?
O pluck it out, and be not slack
To give Thy foes a rappe.

A recent critic, who evidently finds as much solace from Sternhold as George Wither found from his pipe, tells us that 'rappe' in these early days may have meant a heavier, a mightier blow than it does now. So much the worse for the 'foes.' One is not quite sure how the explanation might affect the ethical teaching of the psalm, but there can be no doubt about the doggerel remaining unaffected by the definition. It is just possible that Warton was right in thinking that if Sternhold had given the people better poetry they would not have taken to it so kindly; for after all there is something in Samuel Wesley's dictum that 'the common people have a strange genius for understanding nonsense.' At any rate, we shall not be wrong if we say of the old versifiers, as quaint Thomas Fuller said, that they were men whose piety was better than their poetry. They had drunk much more freely of Jordan than of Helicon, and their rhyme is sometimes so poor that two hammers on a smith's anvil would have made better music. That, too, was evidently the opinion of the witty Earl of Rochester, whose impromptu on passing a church with Charles II. while a parish clerk was singing is worth quoting :

Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,
 When they translated David's Psalms,
 To make the heart right glad :
 But had it been King David's fate
 To hear thee sing and them translate,
 By heavens ! 'twould set him mad.

Nor were Tate and Brady much better. It was not quite in accordance with the fitness of things that a couple of such shady characters should have been selected to provide praise material for the churches. One of his biographers is rather disingenuous when he tells us that Tate had 'a great deal of modesty, which prevented him making his fortune.' He was certainly modest enough to die in the Mint, but that was because he had seldom been satisfied with the modest glass that poets laureate have generally found sufficient for their inspiration, and had to fly to what was then a refuge for debtors. He was not too modest to dare an 'improvement' of *King Lear*; while his coadjutor, equally modest, tried to rival Dryden in a translation of the *Æneid*—a translation of which Johnson said it did not live long enough to cry when it was dragged into the world. However, the question of fitness may be waived, since the Tate and Brady version gave more amusement and has suggested more humorous quotation than even Sternhold and Hopkins or the Bay Psalm-book itself. It was of Bishop Wilberforce that the following Tate and Brady story is told. The Baroness Burdett Coutts was on one occasion driving him out towards Columbia Market when something brought up the word drysalter. 'Does your lordship know what a drysalter is?' said the lady. 'Certainly,' replied the bishop; 'Tate and Brady.' The definition has escaped the dictionaries, but the philologists might do worse than consider it. There has never yet been a metrical psalter that was not 'dry.'

The old clerk standing up to give out—

Like to an owl in ivy bush,
 That rueful thing am I,

did not know that the parson's cast-off wig, which he had got in a present the day before, was almost burying his face out of sight, and giving a point to the Psalmist's words that was never dreamt of by the inspired singer. The revelation of the cause of the people's merriment would have been discomfiture enough for most men, but it does not seem to have cured the clerk's conceit. Some time after this, on the return of William III. from a visit to

Holland, he stood up one Sunday morning and announced to the people that 'We will now sing to the praise and glory of God a hymn of my own composing.' Had Mr. Traill been there I doubt if he would have seen cause to pride himself on the discovery of a new minor poet, for this is what he would have heard :

King William is come home, come home,
King William home is come,
Therefore let us together sing
The hymn that's called Te D'um !

There is a sweet simplicity about that which reminds one of the innocence of the clerk in Harrington parish church, on whom some wanton wags played one of their practical jokes. It was this old fellow's practice to begin at the first psalm and go on, Sunday by Sunday, with psalm after psalm until he had exhausted the whole hundred and fifty. He always 'made his mark' where he left off, and one Saturday evening the wags neatly pasted over a portion of the next day's division some lines from the ballad of 'Chevy Chase.' The poor man sang on with the greatest unconcern, but he was heard afterwards to say that he had sung the Psalms of David for forty years, but never before found a reference to Douglas or Percy !

But it was not the clerk alone who could afford to dispense with the Scot's petition to 'gi'e us a guid conceit o' oorselves.' The rustic choir always indulged the fond belief that the whole congregation came solely to hear them. One bucolic minstrel has been known to tell the parson that his own was the only part of the service during which no one was asleep. One could not expect a bucolic minstrel to see it, of course, but the wakeful congregation did not necessarily imply a compliment to the choir gallery. A certain dark-skinned monarch found he did not care a bit for the concert, but he always enjoyed the 'tuning up' of the band. It was a peculiar tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar to make the people bow to him at 'the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and *all kinds* of music.' For, as a cynic once remarked, if Orpheus is feigned to have uprooted trees and made immovable things move, so would such wondrous powers have the opposite effect on things animate and movable of making them stand stock-still with astonishment and confusion. Somebody has observed that music is very well but for the noise ; and so far as one can learn, the village orchestra music of 'cornet, dulcimer and sackbut' would be a sure and certain antidote to worship now.

But they did not think so in those days. No! Was it not a 'gallery' man who, dilating on the subject to his clergyman, declared he had authority for saying that the musicians in the Jewish Church had precedence of all other officials, and performed the most essential parts of the service, as was clear from the Psalms: 'The singers go before and the minstrels [perhaps he took that to mean ministers] follow after'? There were grades, too, among the old-time choirs, as a stranger in a certain Durham church once found to his cost when, venturing to join heartily in the hymn, the fat old sexton waddled up to him and said, 'Stop, sir, stop! We do all the singing here ourselves.' The principles of co-operation had evidently not begun to take root in those days; or perhaps the sexton had been reading D'Israeli's 'Curiosities,' where he found that 'an universal suffrage, where every man was to have a voice, must necessarily end in clatter and noise.'

The rustic choir's greatest show was always made in the anthem, in which some bumpkin had generally a solo to exhibit his 'lusty voice.' It was a splendid musical display—of its kind. People came from a long distance to hear it, and felt so satiated that they left without the sermon. No wonder Shakespeare made Sir John Falstaff lose his voice with 'holloing and singing of anthems.' To be sure, he was guilty of an anachronism, for there were no anthems in the fat knight's time; but it may reasonably be supposed that he had become so impressed with this part of the service in his own day, that he dropped into the nod which even Homer is privileged occasionally to enjoy. The Jack Tar who explained a 'hanthem' to his mate on the simple principles of verbal elongation was not so far out after all. 'If I was to say to you,' he began, "'Ere, Bill, give me that handspike," THAT wouldn't be a hanthem; but if I was to say to you, "*Bill, Bill, Bill, give, give, give me, give me, that, that, that handspike, spike, spike, spike,*" why *that* would be a hanthem.' Just after this fashion did the old village choirs tear and toss their anthem texts.

It was Felix Holt who advised his hearers to follow the light of the old-fashioned Presbyterians he heard in Glasgow. 'The preacher gives out a psalm, and then everybody sings a different tune as it happens to turn up in their throats.' Felix thought it was a domineering thing to set a tune and expect everybody else to follow it—'it's a denial of private judgment.' And so it is, no doubt; but then if private judgment is to be exercised at all, it might be as well, one would think, to exercise it *in private*.

Perhaps the thrifty action of the old Scotch lady in singing 'Bangor' to everything, no matter what metre or tune the congregation were singing, would have commended itself exactly to George Eliot's hero.

But indeed the old parish clerk seems to have been almost as parsimonious in the way of tunes as the Scotch lady, notwithstanding that he generally regarded himself as the great musical authority of his district. We read of 'York' tune being sung fifteen times in a week at one church, and of the *Gloria Patria* being drawled out to the lugubrious strains of 'Windsor.' In 1730 a certain James Leman draws a sad picture of the state of psalmody and the accomplishments of the clerks. 'Though we have,' says he, 'several very good and easy tunes, yet not above five or six are commonly made use of, and scarce one private person in a thousand is able to sing them right; nay, even among the clerks themselves there are very few who understand so much of music as to be able to sing many of them either.' Now and again in his efforts to add to his meagre stock some old clerk would conveniently ignore the boundary line that separates the sacred from the secular, and adapt to Sunday uses what was meant for the working day only. The story is told of one singer, who had passed the threescore years and ten, that he managed to press into the service of the church the air and an adaptation of the words of 'In a cottage near a wood.' There was of course some difficulty in getting 'Love and Laura' turned into Scriptural language. But genius can do wonders in removing obstacles, and the congregation were one day startled to hear 'Love and Lazarus' joined together by inseparable bonds! Nor was that all: the old man managed to find 'charms' even in Lazarus, as witness—

Lazarus, O my charming fair,
None wi' Lazarus can compare.

After all, General Booth is not so original as is generally supposed. But if the clerks did not understand music they understood how to take advantage of their position in certain circumstances. In 1741 a disgusted churchman wrote to *Hooker's Weekly*: 'Some parish clerks, when party disputes run high, are proud to pick out a malignant psalm, one which they imagine suits with the state of public affairs, or with some transactions in their own parishes, and casts a reflection upon them, whereby a part of the congregation is grievously scandalised, while the other is unreasonably diverted.'

There are evidences of other 'malignant' little acts on the part of the clerks besides the choosing of particular psalms. At a certain seaport town it was customary for the prayers of the congregation to be solicited on behalf of sailors who had just gone to sea. A popular captain's good lady was more than usually anxious over the safety of her lord and master, and accordingly handed the clerk a slip one Sunday morning bearing the words, 'Captain Wilson having gone to sea, his wife desires the prayers of this congregation on his behalf.' Alas! how easily things go wrong. Whether the clerk was 'malicious' or not one cannot say—probably he did not have a very good wife himself—but at any rate by the simple misplacement of the comma after the 'sea' the congregation were told that 'Captain Wilson having gone to see his wife, desires the prayers of this congregation on his behalf.' Such is the power of a comma! Better, perhaps, in this connection is the story of the deaf minister's clerk, who had handed to him a written slip on which were the following announcements which he was requested to make: (1) The new Psalm-books will be used next Sunday, (2) There will be a baptism of infants next Sunday. Now, clerks, like more ordinary men, were sometimes perverse, and this clerk, it seems, took it into his head to reverse the order of the intimations. Accordingly he began, 'There will be a baptism of infants next Sunday.' He had got no further when the weak piping voice of the deaf divine was heard from the pulpit, 'And those who have not got any may have them for sixpence each at the manse; strong backs, eighteenpence.' One may feel pretty sure that the fun did not come entirely from the 'fuguing' tunes that day.

Webster's South Kensington picture of 'A Village Choir,' painted in 1846, is a suggestive work of art from which one may learn a good deal. Somehow or other it is the instrumentalists, not the vocalists, that take our fancy in such pictures. We like to see the old fellow sawing away at his bass-viol, his round bald head shining in the sunlight like the egg of an ostrich. Generally speaking the players appear to have been chosen, like old Cremona fiddles, 'more for tone than looks;' and as they seem to have had a scarcity of music, necessitating a good deal of 'looking on,' there is a grouping together of physiognomies as odd as the chubby cherubs on the old tombstones. Washington Irving's village tailor, who in blowing his clarionet had blown his face to a point, does not appear to have been a common type. The clarionet

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING.

YESTERDAY.

Undine speaks :

I stand in the hush of the hastening river,
Under willows that quiver from grey to green ;
And the dreaming lilies raise fair flower faces
To touch my knees, from their deep recesses,
The cool clear pools, where the rushes lean.

I fear no care, and I feel no sorrow,
Life, to you mortals so full of pain,
To me goes by as a dream of pleasure,
Like the dancing river, a laughing measure,
And to-day in to-morrow returns again.

And yet, sometimes, as I watch the river
I wonder if life could give something more,
For at whiles I weary of shade and sunlight,
Of all the changes of star and moonlight,
Of the ripples breaking against the shore.

TO-DAY.

What has happened since yesterday ?
Was it a God who sat on yon stone
And sang sweet songs to the stream, alone,
While I peeped from under the willows grey ?
And his eyes lit on mine as I wondering stood,
And his wonderful eyes shone clear and still,
Like some mountain lake in the heart of a hill,
Or a pool in the depths of a wood.

And he beckoned me on where the lilies swayed
On the glassy stream, with their bright eyes wide
And trembling, I waited by his side,
And as I listened, the song he played
On the reedy pipes, wove into my brain :
Music that told of pain and strife,
Of love and of longing, the song of life ;
Some day I shall hear it again.

I know not how long I stood mid the flowers
With the song in my ears, and his eyes on mine ;
But I know that somehow I have passed the line
Which separates this day from that ; the hours
Are not as once. Something has passed away,
Changing the song of the summer birds,
I would I had never heard his words.
Oh for yesterday—yesterday !

ULRICH OF LICHTENSTEIN.

IN the whole range of mediæval literature there is not a more curious biography, not a more astounding monument of human folly, and hardly a more graphic picture of the manners of the age, than the memoirs of Ulrich of Lichtenstein, a minnesinger of the thirteenth century.

Unfortunately the only MS. is incomplete; however, quite enough remains to give us the story of Ulrich's life and the measure of his folly. The first to draw attention to the memoir was Tieck, in 1812, but he did not publish the original. That was done by Lachmann in 1844, with critical notes begun by Karajan, but unfinished, and by no means as full as might be desired. This is still the only available edition; a few critics have since touched Ulrich, notably Knorr, but from literary and linguistic sides. His importance as a painter of the social characteristics of his age has been acknowledged, but his many touches illustrative of the knightly usages, armorial blazonry, family history of his period and country, have yet to be examined.

His biography, extending from 1211 to 1255, is written in strophes consisting of four pairs of rhymes. Into this he has woven his songs and several 'Little Books' or love letters.

The biography is, therefore, a metrical poem; its poetical value is small, but it is a work of the highest interest as a picture of the manners and morals of his time.

In addition to this biography he wrote a poem in 1257, which he called the 'Book of Women,' which contains a dialogue on the moral disorders of the period. It can hardly be matter of doubt that Fouqué was deeply influenced by the memoirs of Ulrich, and adopted from him the system of throwing lays and songs into the midst of his narrative.

The memoir is so little known, and so hard to make out, except by a scholar versed in the mediæval German, that a brief sketch of its extravagant contents will be novel and amusing to the English reader.

Vernon Lee, in her 'Euphorion,' has given us an article on the minstrel-love of mediævalism, and has described it as some-

thing very different from what De la Motte Fouqué and the Romancists would have us suppose. It was no idealising of woman, no platonic love and far-off worship, pure as that offered to the queen of heaven; it was, according to her, utterly gross.

I think she overstates the case; and the story of Ulrich of Lichtenstein, the very Quixote and fool of love, the reduction to absurdity of mediæval woman-worship, will show this.

Ulrich of Lichtenstein sprang of a noble Styrian family; he was born in 1199, and was the son of Dietmar III. and his wife Kunigund. His pedigree can be traced back to Dietmar I. of Lichtenstein, in the service of the Margrave Ottokar of Styria, in 1140. Although the connection cannot be definitely established, there can exist little doubt that the present princely family of Lichtenstein, that owns the smallest principality in Europe, traces from a common ancestor. They derive from a Hugh of Lichtenstein in Styria, who was the contemporary of Dietmar I., and probably his brother.

‘When I was a little child,’ says Ulrich, ‘I heard the wise often say that no man could achieve anything worthy who was not in the service of good women, and that no man was so joyous and cheerful in the world as he who loved a pure woman as his own body. I was a child when I heard that, a silly child riding on a stick, and yet in my simplicity I resolved, as pure women make man so worthy, I would ever serve the women with body, estate, heart, and life. In this resolution I attained my twelfth year.’

In 1215 Ulrich was put, after the manner of the times, as page in a noble house. His father died in 1219. For four years he was in the service of an exalted lady whom he does not name, but who we can hardly doubt was Agnes of Meran, who became the third wife of Frederick the Quarrelsome, Duke of Austria and Styria, after his divorce from Sophia, daughter of the Emperor Theodore Laskaris, in 1229. She was the daughter of Otto I. of Meran. At once he made her his ideal, and adored her with wondering and somewhat grotesque devotion.

‘When in summer I plucked fair flowers, I took them to my lady, and when she held them in her white hand, then I thought in my joy, Where thou hast grasped them, there I held them. Also when my dear lady poured water over her white hands, I took the water secretly away, and out of love to her *drank it*.’

From his twelfth year till he was thirty-two he remained

faithful to this divinity of his heart, causing her a considerable amount of annoyance by his assiduity in courting her.

This devotion to an ideally perfect lady by no means interfered with his marrying another, in what year is not certain; Bertha, daughter of the knight Alram of Weitzenstein, who bore him two sons and a daughter; his eldest son, Otto II., succeeded him and continued the race. His daughter Linkardis died a nun at Admont. His biography tells us nothing of his betrothal and marriage. He casually mentions his wife and children, always with affection, but never with any romance.

After four years in the service of the lady of his heart,¹ he was transferred to the court of Henry of Austria, son of Leopold VI., Duke of Styria and Austria, where he remained till he was twenty. In 1222, he was dubbed knight at the marriage of Agnes, the sister of his master, with Albert Duke of Saxony, and this is the date of his first poetical composition.

The marriage took place at Vienna; 'five thousand knights ate at the prince's board, there were many tourneys and dances, and much knightly exercise. The Duchess was there with her charming daughter, and many good ladies. My Light was also there, my sweet pure lady, but not one word could I speak through the festivities to the rich in virtues, whereat I was sad. I left to escape the prying eyes of the curious. When she saw me equipped with knightly shield, the good one said to a friend, I am truly glad that Sir Ulrich is become a knight; I parted with him when he was but a little fellow. When my friend told me that my knighthood gave her satisfaction, I rejoiced with all my heart, and asked myself whether she would take me as her knight.

'In that summer I tourneyed twelve times. When the cold winter came, I, lovesick, had to desist from jousting, therefore I was sad, and my lady was so guarded that I could never get near her to tell her that she was dearer to me than my own body.' However, he composed a song in her honour, the first in his book, and he persuaded his aunt, whose name we do not know, to take

¹ There is a doubt whether he was not with Henry, Margrave of Istria. He calls his master a Margrave, but Henry of Istria was expelled his Margravate in 1209, for participation in the murder of King Philip. If this were so, then Agnes of Meran, supposing her to have been his lady, was the niece of his master. Her father, Otto Duke of Meran, was Margrave of Istria from 1215 to 1230. As he married in 1208, Agnes must have been quite a child at the time that Ulrich chose her as his lady.

the copy of verses to her. She was five weeks absent; on her return she told Ulrich how the lady had received his verses. 'She said, "The song is well enough, but I will have none of it, therefore hold thy tongue. That your nephew may be a gallant man I allow, he was once my page, but he must have done with this folly. I will never accept his service. Why, even if he were my equal in rank I could never endure his ugly mouth. Allow me to say that it disfigures him, as you know very well."'

What was precisely the matter with Ulrich's mouth we do not know, probably he had a thick double lip. No sooner did he hear these words than off he galloped to Gratz to an experienced surgeon, to have his mouth operated on. 'He said to me, "Now I cannot operate; before May I will not use my knife, but I swear, in May, to put your mouth so to rights that you will rejoice ever after; in these matters I am a master." So I rode away that winter, to see ladies, till the sweet summer came, and the birds began to sing, and then I said to myself, Now is the time come for me to go to Gratz and have my mouth cut.' Accordingly Ulrich sought the surgeon.

'One Monday morning he began to carve me; he wanted to bind me, but I would not suffer it. I said, I have ridden all this way to you, and I will not budge a hair's-breadth whilst you cut, even if I die for it. But I was very frightened, and I sat on a bench. He took a knife, and cut my mouth above the teeth, and I did not wince. He cut in a masterly way, and I bore the pain in a masterly way also.'

Before the operation began, Ulrich had succeeded in catching one of his mistress's servants, and he carried him off to Gratz, and insisted on his sitting in the room and watching the operation, so that he might be able to give his lady a faithful account of what her true lover and knight had suffered for her pleasure.

'I lay more than a month and a half sick after this; I was both well and suffering. I suffered because my mouth was healing, but my heart was well-content. I endured terrible thirst and hunger. I could not eat nor drink, as lips and teeth were aching. A fœtid green salve was smeared over my mouth, and when I was forced to eat or drink, this salve ran in between my lips, producing in me such disgust that I took only what was necessary to keep body and soul together.'

When he was recovered he sent his aunt off to the lady with a second song composed to a dance tune. His mistress answered

that she would consent to see him 'for his mouth's sake; for nothing else.' He at once rode to attend her, as she was on a journey from one castle to another, but though he approached her several times, 'full ten times I opened my mouth to speak to her, but my tongue was as if paralysed, and would not utter a word. This happened quite five times in the day. The journey drew to an end, and the ladies had to be helped from their horses. I took hold of the steps and helped many illustrious ladies down. The peerless one was still in her saddle, and many knights and squires stood about her, and she laughed and joked with them. But when I came to hold the steps, she said, "You are not strong enough to help me down; you have been sick." Then many laughed, and she stepped down; without my help, but in so doing caught hold of my hair and pulled out some of it, and as she did so, she said, "You are too timorous; I have heard a false report of you."'

Next day he had the courage to address her whilst she was on horseback, and offer, 'I will venture my life for you in knightly adventures, and be your true knight till death.'

'Be silent,' she answered, 'you are a boy. Gallop off and leave me at once, as you value my regard; you are intolerable.' Then she called up some of her retainers, and Ulrich had not another opportunity of addressing her; however, he departed, glad of heart that he had been able to tell her what he felt and desired.

Next winter he sent her his first 'Little Book,' a poem of about five hundred lines, and with it a song. She read his verses and added a few lines to them. Ulrich was himself no scholar, and could not decipher what she had written, so he was obliged to wait till his clerk arrived—ten days, and all the time, night and day, he hugged the book to his breast. When, however, his clerk read her verses, he found that they conveyed little encouragement. She had written in the book—

Many a man says more than his heart feels,
When he desires that which he may not have.
Whoever wishes what he ought not,
He is false to himself.

Lines which show a marked poverty of invention. Not satisfied with this answer, Ulrich sent his lady another poetical message; to which she replied that he was a fool, and that she did not choose to be pestered by him. The message was not gracious, and Ulrich was very unhappy in consequence. He rode in several

tournaments which he minutely describes, and gives lists of the knights and nobles present, and in one joust he had at Brixen, had one of his fingers torn by his antagonist's spear. Those who took part in the tourney came to condole with him, but Ulrich declared manfully that he rejoiced in his wound, because he had bled in the honour of the lady of his heart, and he at once sent her a poem set to a dance tune, to assure her of his love in spite of the pain he suffered from his injured finger. It must be admitted he made an amazing fuss over his wounded finger.

She replied contemptuously that the poem was well enough, but that it was absurd for Ulrich to say he had lost a finger in her honour, as she had been informed on reliable authority that his finger was still *in situ*, and that all he had received in the joust was a scratch. When Ulrich heard this, he put a knife in the hand of a friend, laid his crippled finger on a block and bade him chop it off. This his friend did reluctantly. Then the knight of Love had his finger embalmed, and sent it with another poem to the lady of his heart.

His devotion was embarrassing, and the dried finger was not a particularly attractive present. The lady told his messenger, 'I will keep his finger shut up in a small cabinet drawer; but pray assure Ulrich that this is not intended as any encouragement to him. I thought him a fool before, and I think him doubly a fool now. I will not accept his service, no—not if he goes on offering me his homage for a thousand years.'

Whoever the lady was, Agnes of Meran or not, we must respect her as a sensible woman. Throughout she acted with self-respect, as became a lady of her rank and position. When Ulrich heard this message, so far from being discouraged, he was impelled to still greater efforts of quixotic folly. He announced to her that in her honour he would take a journey from Venice to the river Thaya in Moravia in twenty-nine days, resting only three whole days on the route, and throughout his course he would break spears with gallant knights in her honour, and would give a gold ring to every man who encountered him.

Accordingly, on April 25, 1227, Ulrich started on his journey. A whole month before he had sent a messenger along the route chosen, with an open letter announcing that Venus, the Queen of Love, was about to journey that way, and inviting all the knights of Lombardy, Friule, Carinthia, Styria, Austria, and Bohemia to

break a lance with her. He laid down a complete plan of his course, and stated where he would halt every night and where he would spend his three days of rest.

He would start from Mestre on the mainland, and go by Treviso to Villach, thence by the Semmering pass to Vienna, and so by Feldsberg to the Thaya. But the most extraordinary part of this proceeding was that Ulrich was to ride and joust in female attire as Venus, the Queen of Love; and he gives us the most minute and grotesque account of the feminine wardrobe he supplied himself with for the part he was to take.

He had twelve gowns and fifteen white shifts, each with a pair of white sleeves, a velvet mantle, and a pair of long fair plaits of hair that would hang below his girdle. The attachment of these plaits to his head was concealed by a net of pearls. For his face he wore a wimple that covered his mouth and showed only his eyes.

The procession led off with his marshal and cook and scullion riding forward with other servants carrying everything necessary for his lodging. Then followed his banner unfurled, 'white as a swan,' between two trumpeters. Then three baggage horses with his wardrobe, led by three pages, 'garzune,' next his tilting horses caparisoned in white, and his squires carrying his shield, plain white,¹ and his helmet splendidly crowned, as became that of the Queen of Love. Then came a kettledrum-beater mounted, making a prodigious noise. After him rode squires holding the tilting spears. Then two maidens, attendants on Venus, in white garments, next a couple of fiddlers, and finally Ulrich, on a side-saddle, dressed up like the Queen of Love, with two long plaits of hair interlaced with ribbons and pearls hanging down his back, fluttering in the air.

He had hoped to have his first tilt at Treviso, where Count Meinrad of Goerz and the knight Leutfrid of Eppenstein were in waiting for him; but the podesta refused to allow any tilting. He said, as the author admits, 'I as magistrate would be a fool if I allowed such folly to take place where I have jurisdiction.' The Count of Goerz in vain pleaded with the podesta; he would not yield till the women of Treviso went to him and entreated him to indulge them with the sight of a joust. He reluctantly gave way, but only so far as to allow of two spears being broken. The

¹ Elsewhere he tells us his arms were ermine, two bars sable.

knights armed, and Ulrich enters into minute particulars as to the blazoning of the Count's shield. 'I was ready in my white vesture with a shining crown about my helmet, my long plaits waving behind and touching the saddle. The mantling of my helm was a network of pearls. I wore a white gown, in which the dressmakers had taken great pains with the pleats. My zone was inlaid with gold and was three finger-breadths wide. My bodice below my bosom was embroidered with gold.' Naturally all the town turned out, and the sensible podesta had much ado to keep order. At the first meeting with the Count, both spears were shivered, and the shields met and clashed. The podesta would not allow another course with the Count. It was next the turn of Eppenstein. Eppenstein missed his stroke, his lance hit the horse of his antagonist in the neck; the horse reared, and away over his back—petticoats, gown, veil, and plaits flying—went the Queen of Love.

The Count of Goerz received a golden ring for having jousted with Ulrich, but Ulrich was obliged the rest of the day to keep to his bed, he was so jarred by his fall. Next day, 'before I rose, full two hundred women had come to my inn to inquire when I would go to church.' When Ulrich heard this, in spite of his aches, he rose and dressed himself. 'I put on a white little shift with two long sleeves, over that a gown white as a swan, and a white velvet mantle embroidered in gold with all kinds of animals, also a wimple, and my plaits with pearls interwoven with them. Only my eyes showed. I set a hat with peacock's feathers on my head and wore gloves on my hands. The Countess of Goerz held up my train as I walked to church, and my chamberlain went before with a carpet and a soft pillow for my seat.'

A crowd, especially of women, filled the church, and more eyes were turned on the Queen of Love than on the priest at the altar. When it came to the *pax*, which was a little metal plate which the priest kissed and then passed round through the congregation, great curiosity was excited, because it was thought that Venus must unveil to kiss the *pax*, and so disclose whether she were a woman or a man. It must here be stated that all the attendants in the train were sworn to secrecy as to who their leader was. Ulrich kissed the plate through the veil, and passed it to the Countess, who exclaimed that this would not do, it must be touched with the lips. Then Ulrich hastily drew down the white linen that covered his lips, and the Countess saw his moustache.

Then she exclaimed, 'There! there! I see clearly enough you are a man. It matters not, I will take the kiss of peace from you, because you are jousting to woman's honour!' After this Ulrich had plenty of spear-breaking, and he had to give away a great many gold finger rings to his antagonists.

On one day alone he had to give away twenty-three of them. The further he went on his extraordinary pilgrimage, the more the excitement grew, the more people came to see him. Ulrich frankly admits that many men laughed at him. At Judenburg he gave away six rings, at Kruttelfeld two, at Leoben thirteen, next day twelve. The cost of this foolish affair must have been enormous. He ran three hundred and seven tilts on the journey.

After the completion of this pilgrimage, Ulrich returned to his home and sent a long poem to his lady by a faithful friend. She was both irritated and perplexed what to do with such an admirer; there seemed to be no depth of absurdity to which he would not sink, and she was afraid lest he should drag her good name into ridicule along with his own. She sent to him to say that she still absolutely refused his service, but that she would consent to see him and tell him her mind plainly, if he would come to her castle in the disguise of a leper on a Sunday morning.

When Ulrich received this news away he galloped to his mistress's castle, and in one day killed two of his horses with overriding them. On reaching the nearest town he procured for himself and his companion the rags of a beggar and the wraps and crock of a leper; he had learned in his native mountains the properties of a poisonous berry which, when eaten, swells the face, and makes it of a deadly hue; now he ate this berry and made himself very wretched and sick with it. However, he mastered his discomfort and went to the castle, where he and his squire found a number of lepers and other sick and poor persons congregated. Very reluctantly Ulrich sat down in the grass with them, waiting for alms from the castle. The beggars asked him all sorts of questions, which he evaded with difficulty. The beggars gave Ulrich a good account of the lady of the castle. Every day she sent them out bread and wine and a penny each. He must go and tap at the window, and hold out his crock, and he would be relieved.

Then Ulrich went to a window before which a curtain was hung, 'such as are set up to keep off wind or sun,' and knocked at it. Whereupon a maid came forth, and asked him questions, and

when she perceived who he was she bade him and his squire sit apart from the rest, and she would give them food. Presently she filled their crocks with roast fowl and wine and bread, and bade Ulrich be careful what he was about. Her good lady would not endure to have her name brought into ill repute through him.

Towards evening the lepers and mendicants retired, and Ulrich was invited by several of them to their hovels; to escape their hospitality he and his companion hid in a field of standing corn. During the night heavy rain fell, and both were wet to the skin, and morning broke on them in sad plight. When the maiden came with food and alms for the sick and poor, she was surprised to see Ulrich again there, and asked him if he had not spent a wretched night. He admitted that it had been execrable. She warned him that the lepers suspected him; one of them had told her that he had seen that the new comers wore linen as fine as any cavalier. Then she told him that her mistress would give him audience the ensuing night. He was to lay aside his leper's weeds, and be ready under the window of the 'kemenate,' or lady's bower. A carpet would be let down, and he was to step into it, and he would be drawn up.

Ulrich awaited the close of day with inexpressible eagerness. The sun set, and when darkness gathered, the seneschal came out, went round the castle to see that all was safe, then fastened the gates, and they saw his candle travel up the stairs by the windows through which the light flashed alternately.

When all was safe, Ulrich and his comrade went below the kemenate and found the carpet let down by ropes attached to the ends. He jumped in and the squire thrust him up from below, but when he came beyond the reach of the squire's arms, the hands of the maidens above were unable to draw him higher. He was pulled up a little way, then let down again; this happened thrice, and at last he was lowered to the ground. Then said Ulrich to his squire, 'You are not so bulky a man as myself; you get in and be pulled up, then you can help the damsels.' This he did, and when the squire reached the window, one of the maidens gave him a kiss, thinking this was Ulrich. She was his niece, and very much ashamed she was afterwards when she found she had kissed a man who was not her relation. The squire now lent the assistance of his strong arms, and speedily Ulrich was pulled up to the window and kissed by his niece.

Ulrich was received by his lady in state. She was richly dressed; he having acquired a practical acquaintance with the female wardrobe, describes her costume with care. She was seated on a couch which he also describes with even more precision, surrounded by eight of her ladies, and with more than a hundred wax lights burning on the walls.

Ulrich knelt at the lady's feet, and declared his devotion and passion.

Then she answered, 'Do not be elated because I have received you here, or think that I shall regard you in any other light than I have hitherto. My husband and lord need never fear that I should care for any other man than himself. Even if my God and my honour did not forbid it, my husband would know how to guard me. But I have a better guard than that,—my own pure will which cleaves to him above all others. I have shown you a higher favour than any other man in giving you this interview. Ask nothing further of me or you will lose my respect, which is the utmost I can give you.'

But Ulrich was not abashed, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the lady was able to persuade him to depart, and when the squire had first been dismissed by the carpet, then Ulrich was put into it and let down; but, as the maidens' arms had not been able to raise him, so they were not now able to let him down slowly. The rope ran through their hands, and Ulrich came with such a bang upon the ground as nearly to knock the few senses he had out of him.

When he had picked himself up he ran howling to the nearest river to drown himself, followed by his squire, who arrested him on the bank and bade him be a man and not whimper like a woman. 'I must say I am glad no one sees you conduct yourself in this unmanly fashion.'

That night the watchman heard Ulrich's howls, and ran from the battlements into the castle and told everyone that he had heard the Valand (Wayland),¹ wailing under the castle walls, 'Alas! alas!' and then he ran down towards the valley, the stones rolling after him, and the watchman was afraid and crossed himself, he said. 'Tell your master it ill becomes a knight to lament like a sick woman.'

¹ A sort of Banshee, or evil spirit; the word often occurs in the mediæval heroic poems.

Ulrich now returned to Lichtenstein in most disconsolate mood, and sent another messenger to his lady, who had hoped that she was well rid of the troublesome fellow. She sent back word that he had best go crusading—to Jericho.

Ulrich, however, did not go to the Holy Land. He pretended that his lady excused him.

In 1233 Ulrich gave up his devotion to this lady for some reason he does not particularise, and his last poem sent her is one of abuse. This is the twenty-first of his songs to her.

Very soon after he took up with another lady, and sang her praises, but in a very different tone from those he addressed to the first. To the first he spoke always with reverence; to the latter he shows not a spark of true respect, his verses are gross and indecent.

In 1248 Ulrich was seized by a couple of knights and thrown into prison. The years 1246 to 1249 were a period of confusion in Styria, and his personal enemies, perhaps his creditors, took advantage of the time to master his person. Just before this he had, in his forty-fifth year, or thereabouts, made a second absurd pilgrimage, only this one was not in the character of the Queen of Love, but of King Arthur, with all his knights of the Round Table. Unfortunately the manuscript is here defective; from six to eight pages are lacking. This carnival train must have cost him a large sum of money, and it is quite possible that it may have been the occasion of his arrest. We may conjecture that Pilgrim of Kars and Weinholt, the knights who seized him, may have advanced him money, and saw no chance of recovering it till they got him locked up. He was confined in the Frauenburg for a year and three weeks, and was only released when Count Meinhard of Goerz was made Governor of Styria, by his intervention. Then he was obliged to give his two sons and his castle of Lichtenstein in pledge, that he would pay what was demanded of him. This he did eventually, but Ulrich passes lightly over this painful circumstance. 'I will not say how I got out of these troubles, I will rather sing of women; but I lost much property.' The Count of Goerz and Styria would not have permitted mere robbery. Pilgrim of Kars must have had some legitimate claim on the minnesinger.

We know nothing further of importance of Ulrich of Lichtenstein. He died January 26, 1276, and was succeeded in his castle and honours by his son Otto.

It will be hardly fair to our poet to dismiss him without a sample of his love-songs. Here is one:—

In the scented soft May breezes
 Forests don their kirtles green ;
 All is melting, nothing freezes,
 Flushes with auroral sheen ;
 Waking,
 Breaking,
 Hearts laugh out, with love aglow,
 May, sweet May, will have it so.

Wintry bosoms, ne'er so dreary
 But the sunshine thrills them through,
 Heavy spirits, ne'er so weary,
 But are twinkling in their dew,
 Laughing,
 Quaffing,
 Life in measure full, I trow,
 May, sweet May, will have it so.

No more wax and wane, and changing
 Let there be in Love that's true,
 Seasonless and never ranging,
 Such, dear love, my love for you.
 Yearning,
 Burning,
 Or, as brook in even flow,
 May, sweet May, will have it so.

Ulrich's poetical memoirs carry him up to 1255 ; his minstrel vigour decreased, between 1233 and 1240 he composed only nine songs ; his enthusiasm for beautiful ladies burned out, and with it his poetic fire, such as it was. He winds up his memoirs with some very matter-of-fact remarks. 'There are five things I tell you are the best and noblest to which a man can attain. The first is a pure wife, the second is appetising food, both admirable things ; then good horses, good clothing, and good housing. He who has these five things is a rich and blessed man.' At last—a recognition of that patient and much-enduring Bertha ! Better late than never, though then put only on a level with a well-cooked dinner.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

HONOUR AND GLORY.

PEGGY ROWLEY knew all that Douglas knew about the Countess Radna's proceedings at Nice—for she also had enjoyed the privilege of a chat with Lady Winkfield—but the subject was not one upon which she felt any inclination to dwell, nor did she choose to respond to certain leading remarks which he made respecting it. If his wife's flirtations alarmed him, by all means let him go and expostulate with her—that would be one means, though probably not the best that could be devised, towards bringing about the *redintegratio amoris* which both of them evidently desired—but Peggy did not happen to have conceived much respect or affection for the Countess, and was, consequently, not anxious to discuss her. It was far safer and far more interesting to discuss contemporary politics, in which field she now felt sure that Douglas was destined to play a prominent part.

'All you have to do is to go in and win,' she assured him; 'I've talked to the Ministers and their wives, and I know pretty well how you stand. They can't do without you, and you mustn't make it too easy for them to do with you. It ought to be well driven into their heads that you aren't an everyday man who can be bought at an everyday price.'

'You are shockingly immoral,' answered Douglas, laughing. 'Even if my support were worth as much as you are kind enough to imply that it is, I shouldn't wish to sell it, either at a high price or a low one. Besides, I really don't so very much care. I have my humble convictions, and I endeavour to give utterance to them from time to time, that's all.'

'Oh, you care,' returned Peggy composedly; 'everybody cares, and everybody is quite right. You aren't being asked to sell yourself; it is only being suggested to you that you shouldn't ignore your own value at this game any more than you would at

a game of cricket. As for your convictions—well, it is a piece of luck for you that they don't always chance to accord with the convictions of the captain of the team. You're entitled to make the most of that piece of luck.'

He honestly thought that he was; and, as his adviser had shrewdly divined, he was not quite so indifferent to political renown as he affected to be. What else, indeed, was there left for him to aspire to? A man must needs set some object or other before himself in life, and although Frank Innes had not been wrong in averring that he would gladly sacrifice fame and fortune for the sake of winning back his wife's love, it was hardly to be expected of him that he should incur the sacrifice without the slightest prospect of obtaining the reward. He therefore threw himself, heart and soul, into the Parliamentary struggle, getting a great deal of pleasure and excitement out of it and thoroughly enjoying the conversations with Peggy Rowley, by which he was, every now and then, cheered on his way. He did not forget Hélène; still there were a considerable number of hours out of the twenty-four during which it was quite impossible for him to think about her.

Now, there was one measure amongst those included in the Government programme announced at the beginning of the Session which Douglas had said all along that he was afraid he would have to oppose. It was a measure which, whether intrinsically good or bad, was sure to be eventually brought in and carried by one or other of the parties which control our national destinies in obedience to the see-saw of the national will; but it could hardly be called a Tory measure; so that not a few of the old-fashioned Tories were apt to look sullen and mutinous when it was mentioned in their hearing. One knows the arguments by means of which these excellent and conscientious men are customarily induced to do what they are wanted to do; one understands the necessity of discipline, the impossibility of stemming the flowing tide and the advantage of introducing in a modified shape a so-called reform which one's opponents, if they could get the chance, would doubtless render ten times more objectionable. Still it surely remains permissible for a young man who is neither old-fashioned nor bigoted to speak against a Bill of which he honestly disapproves—always supposing that, by doing so, he can secure a reasonable probability of the abandonment of that Bill by its framers. It was because Douglas Colborne heartily disapproved of the Bill in question, and because he was well aware

that many of those who sat on the same side of the House with him disapproved of it not less heartily that, when the time came for it to be brought forward, he delivered an oration much better, much more applauded and much more successful than that by which he had first made his mark in public life. His action, of course, laid him open to adverse criticism, of which he received a full measure in the sequel; but the immediate results of his speech were that the Government narrowly escaped defeat, that the Bill was shelved for that Session, and that Peggy Rowley, who had been one of the interested spectators in the ladies' gallery, blew the loud trumpet of triumph.

'You have done it this time, and no mistake!' she declared, when she met her county-member on the morrow. 'You were magnificent!—and you were in the right too. A detail; still a satisfactory one, so far as it goes. Now the question is what is to be the next step?'

'The next step, so far as I can see,' answered Douglas, 'will be to eat humble pie. I have already had to explain that, though I am not repentant, I am sincerely sorry and that I won't do such things again if I can possibly help it. I have been given to understand that it was a rather shabby trick and that I wasn't returned to Parliament to upset the apple-cart.'

'Oh, rubbish!—they can't complain of you for being more consistent than they themselves are. Besides, you have only to refer them to your election speeches, which I confess I thought rather imprudent at the time, but which certainly didn't promise them unconditional obedience. As matters stand, it is they who will have to come to terms with you, not you with them.'

'They have virtually done that, inasmuch as they don't mean to proceed with their Bill. I demanded nothing more, and I have no notion of demanding anything more. But nobody—not even you—will believe that a politician may be an honest man.'

'There is nothing dishonest in elbowing your way out of a crowd of mediocrities. Can you honestly say that you would refuse office, if it were offered to you? If you can, you may as well apply for the Chiltern Hundreds forthwith and spend the best years of your life in some more useful and interesting fashion than following your leader. There are plenty of Browns, Joneses, and Robinsons who might easily replace you, if that is all the advantage that you propose to take of your position.'

'Well, you see, there is no office vacant just now, and if there

were, I should undoubtedly bind myself to follow my leader by accepting it. I might accept or I might refuse—most likely I should refuse; because what seems to me most interesting, and perhaps even most useful, in Parliamentary life is precisely the liberty which you are so anxious that I should resign. Moreover, I am not in the least ambitious: why should I be, now that I have nobody but myself to think about? For reasons which you know of, I need an occupation. I don't need honour and glory, and I shouldn't know what to do with them when I got them.'

'I could tell you what to do with them,' returned Peggy; 'only it would be a waste of breath; for you are quite as well aware as I am that honour and glory never fail to produce a certain effect upon certain minds. Don't cut off your nose to spite your face. That is an operation which it cannot be worth anybody's while to perform—especially when a woman is concerned in the consequences of it.'

'You are not too complimentary to your sex,' remarked Douglas. 'Do you mean to say that you yourself would care any the more for a man because he was a Cabinet Minister, or any the less for him because he was a nobody?'

'I mean to say exactly what I said just now,' answered Peggy; 'I mean to say that certain people admire success; and why shouldn't they, since success is really admirable? Also I mean to say that I, personally, shall care a good deal less for you if you make a deliberate fool of yourself.'

'In that case,' Douglas declared, 'I will endeavour to avoid deliberate folly. I have lost enough already without losing my friends into the bargain. I wish you didn't think, though, that all this temporary notoriety of mine was the result of calculation, or that I expected to gain anything by it.'

'You are about the least calculating person whom I have ever met in my life,' replied Peggy; 'but you can't help gaining something by your notoriety, whether you wish for it or not—and I shouldn't wonder if you did wish for a little of it. However, I have nothing to do with your private affairs. With your public affairs I make so bold as to consider that I am more or less mixed up; and that is why I should find it extremely difficult to forgive you for letting one of those chances slip which don't usually come to any man a second time.'

If it be a gain to have your portrait published in illustrated newspapers, to be talked about in all the clubs and to be eagerly

sought after by fashionable hostesses, those advantages of notoriety were not denied to Douglas Colborne. He was the celebrity of the hour; and it is probably not disagreeable, though it may not be absolutely intoxicating, to be a celebrity even for an hour. Society welcomed him none the less warmly because it was very generally suspected by this time that there had been a split between him and the opulent Hungarian Countess who had herself been something of a celebrity a twelvemonth before. Matrimonial splits will, as everybody knows, occur from time to time in the best-regulated families, and persons who claimed to possess the most authentic information declared that poor Mr. Colborne was not in the least to blame for the eccentricities of his wife. It was, perhaps, rather a pity that, when he went into the world, he should be so constantly seen at Peggy Rowley's elbow; but Peggy was too popular and too powerful to be maligned with impunity, so that not many ill-natured remarks were made on that score. Douglas, therefore, never dined at home during this period of his career, and not infrequently put in a late appearance at receptions and balls after the rising of the House.

It was at one of these entertainments that he was greeted somewhat excitedly by Peggy Rowley with the exclamation: 'At last! I was afraid you didn't mean to turn up at all to-night. Of course you have heard about poor old Palairet.'

'I have heard that he is very ill,' answered Douglas.

'Oh, he is dying; there isn't the shadow of a doubt about that. He may be dead at this moment. Well, one is sorry for his people, although he was close upon eighty, so that he can't be said to have been cut off in his prime; but one isn't going to be such a humbug as to shed crocodile's tears over the fact that his death will leave an empty place in the Cabinet which somebody will have to fill.'

'Do you really imagine,' asked Douglas, laughing, 'that I shall be invited to succeed him as First Lord of the Admiralty? I am very much flattered, if you do; but I am afraid you are doomed to disappointment.'

'I imagine nothing so absurd,' answered Peggy tartly; 'but I know that there must be a general shift of posts, and I think I may safely say I know that a post will be offered to you. I wish I knew that you would take it!'

Douglas pondered silently for a few seconds. No overtures had been made to him; Sir William Palairet was not dead yet and

might not die; moreover, he was by no means sure that he could conscientiously surrender the right to speak and vote in accordance with his individual convictions which must inevitably be surrendered by acceptance of office. At last he said :

‘What would be the use? When all’s said and done, it is much better fun to be a free-lance.’

‘There is no use for free-lances in this country,’ returned Peggy decisively. ‘To the best of my belief, there isn’t much use for them in any country. Whether you have intended it or whether you haven’t—and I am quite willing to believe that you haven’t—you have played your cards skilfully up to now. Don’t spoil the whole game by revoking at the last moment. You don’t covet political renown? Well, we will grant, for the sake of argument, that you are sincere in that assertion, though I must be allowed a small mental reservation; but there is something else which you do covet, and the very best way of obtaining it is to show in some open, palpable manner that you are not *le premier venu*. Honestly now— isn’t that the truth?’

Possibly it was the truth; possibly Hélène’s quarrel with him was that he was a mere mediocrity, and possibly there might be some satisfaction, albeit an ignoble one, in demonstrating to her that she had been a trifle over-hasty in setting him down as such; but it was not thus that Douglas was minded to rekindle her love for him, nor, for some reason or other, was it at all agreeable to him that a suggestion of that kind should be made by Peggy Rowley.

‘You don’t seem to have a very exalted opinion of me,’ he remarked. ‘Humble as I am, I am not quite so humble as you make me out, and I don’t know that private liberty isn’t almost as valuable to me as public liberty. All things considered, I shall probably retain both—such as they are.’

He went home in a rather bad humour, saying to himself that nobody—not even Peggy Rowley—was capable of rising above the huckstering spirit of the age, and that, although nothing was more legitimate than for a wife to take pride in the achievements of her husband, nothing could well be more contemptible than for a deserted husband to hold out his achievements as a bait to entice back the wife who had deserted him chiefly because he had not hitherto gratified her ambition. If he was not to be loved for his own sake, he must get on as best he could without being loved at all.

But this getting on as best he could meant having a definite

object of some sort or kind; and when the morning papers brought him the intelligence of the Right Honourable Sir William Palaiet's lamented demise, he could not but feel that, however inadequate might be the motives assigned by Peggy Rowley for urging him to accept office, she had not been wrong in warning him against the folly of cutting off his nose to spite his face. There was not really any reason that he knew of why he should refuse to act with the existing Ministry; while, if he did so, and if his refusal were made public, as it doubtless would be, he would place himself in an irreconcilable position from which, probably, no future efforts would be made to withdraw him. Upon the whole, his inclinations at that early hour of the day when everybody is apt to feel sober and sensible were not adverse to having greatness thrust upon him.

He glanced through the newspaper before attacking his daily budget of letters, and it was not until he had perused and tossed aside half a dozen unimportant epistles that he came to one which was addressed in a stiff, foreign handwriting and which bore the Paris post-mark. Turning to the last page to see who his correspondent might be, he was not a little surprised to read the signature of 'Elise von Bickenbach,' and with quickened interest he ran his eye over the preceding paragraphs.

'Dear Sir,' (the Baroness wrote)—'Pray excuse the liberty that I take in sending these few lines to you. I should not have presumed so far, were it not that the happiness of my beloved Countess Hélène must ever be the first consideration with me, and also that (unless I am greatly mistaken) your happiness, dear sir, is inseparable from hers.

'I despair of being able to explain to you in a language which is not my own all the reasons which I have for hoping that your engagements may permit of your visiting Paris ere long; I will only say that our dear Countess, who caught a severe cold when we were in Hungary last month, is not in as good health as we could wish her to be, that she has heard of your brilliant successes in the English Parliament, and that she has mentioned your name more than once of late in a tone which seemed to me to be sympathetic.

'I do not know whether I ought to add, but I will take it upon myself to run the risk of adding, that a certain Marchese di Leonforte, an Italian gentleman of whom we saw a great deal during

the winter at Nice, has appeared here and calls every day. He is not admitted every day—no, nor even every second day—still he calls; and I think, dear sir, that if you were here, he would perhaps not call any more. That would be a relief to me; for, although I have not a word to say against him, except that he is young and handsome and entirely devoted to our dear Countess, yet I would very much rather see you ringing our door-bell than him.'

The remainder of the poor, kind-hearted, simple old creature's effusion does not need to be quoted. Douglas perceived—as in truth no full-grown mortal in possession of all his wits could have helped perceiving—what she was afraid of, and why she had taken the audacious step of calling her employer's husband to the rescue. But, after full and calm consideration, he decided that it was in no sense his duty to respond to her appeal. To leave England at that particular juncture would be tantamount to making the revoke against which Peggy Rowley had so earnestly cautioned him; and why should he thus play the traitor to himself? In order that his wife might be provided with a counter-attraction and might be induced to forsake a new love for an old one? But really that was a little too much to expect of him and probably a great deal too much to expect of her. She must be perfectly well aware that he desired nothing better than to welcome her back and let bygones be bygones: if she preferred this handsome Italian to him, it was in the last degree unlikely that her preference would be lessened by his humiliating himself so far as to enter into open rivalry with a man whom he ought not to acknowledge as his legitimate rival. No—she had claimed absolute freedom for herself, and she must exercise it, now that she possessed it: he had not been exacting in the past, and he did not propose to be subservient in the future.

He therefore despatched by return of post a somewhat dry reply to the Baroness von Bickenbach's communication, regretting that it was out of the question for him to leave London in the midst of the Parliamentary Session and expressing a hope that the Countess had recovered from her cold. He did not deign to mention the Marchese di Leonforte, but concluded by saying that, although he duly appreciated his correspondent's solicitude for his happiness, he was unable to agree with her in thinking that he could promote it by knocking or ringing at a door which had already been shut in his face. His composition, when he read it

over, did not please him : it sounded pompous and huffy and even a trifle priggish. Still he did not see how he could amend it in any important particular ; so he stamped it and let it go.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE COUNTESS'S EMISSARY.

ALL physicians know that one of the most perplexing problems which they are liable to be called upon to solve in the exercise of their beneficent art is that of how to deal with a patient who has no malady, but an abundance of complaints. Of late years the brutal method has been employed with some measure of success, and Dr. Schott, for his part, was inclined to think well of it. Situated as he was, however, he could hardly give it a fair chance in the Countess Radna's case. He was, indeed, in the habit of adopting a scolding tone with her which she rather liked ; but she only submitted to be scolded because she rather liked it, and she was quite capable of dismissing her medical attendant at any moment, if, in his well-meant endeavours to bully her back into health, he should transgress the limits which she had mentally assigned to him. Now, Dr. Schott did not want to be dismissed. He had grown accustomed to the luxuries of a large household, for which he had found a modest flat in Vienna wholly inadequate as a substitute ; he enjoyed good dinners and travel and change of scene ; and although he certainly did not enjoy the journey through Italy which succeeded the Countess Radna's departure from Nice, that was only because his patroness was so very cross and fractious the whole time. He had never known her so bad before, and he grumbled freely to Bickenbach every now and again.

'It is enough to make a man despair of all remedies !' he declared. 'That melodramatic Leonforte was an excellent tonic ; she dropped him precisely at the right moment ; she can pick up another when and where she pleases, and she has the satisfaction of knowing that Lady Winkfield will inform her husband how well she has diverted herself all through the winter. Yet she is becoming thinner and her temper is becoming more sour every day. I myself,' added the Doctor, patting his waistcoat compassionately, 'am positively losing weight. It is not good to be so worried at my age.'

Worry is bad at any time of life ; and assuredly it was bad for the Countess, whose worries were quite as real as other people's, although she had been guilty of the gratuitous folly of creating them for herself. Neither Rome nor Florence nor Venice nor the representatives of society in those cities, who did their best to render her sojourn amongst them agreeable, availed to soothe her restlessness or to put her in good humour with the world once more. She was dissatisfied with herself, which is an even worse thing than being dissatisfied with everybody else, and it did not take her many weeks to discover that Italy would not do at all. Hungary might possibly be better ; in Hungary she would at least have some duties to perform, and might delude herself into the impression that she was of use by visiting the poor and relieving their eternal sordid necessities.

So, as soon as ever there seemed to be a prospect of the sun having begun to shine again on the other side of the mountains, she disregarded the warnings of Dr. Schott and removed herself to the great, chilly castle which was nominally her home. She had never hitherto regarded it as a possible place of continuous residence ; but she now took it into her head that she would give it a serious trial. Immediately after her arrival she set to work, and for a few days rather enjoyed talking things over with her steward and issuing instructions to him. It presently appeared, however, that there was little scope for the beneficence which she desired to display. Although she had been such a constant absentee, her estates had been well managed, her liberality had been boundless, and her dependents were perfectly contented. Many of them were poor ; but they did not seem to mind being poor, while they evinced a very decided preference for ignorance and dirt, and grew half frightened, half defiant at the first suggestion of any interference with their customary manner of life. The Countess was not the woman to undertake one of those long battles against prejudice which can only be won by patience and good humour ; she had the instincts of a despot ; she was disposed to say that if people didn't know what was best for them, they must be content to obey orders ; and, with her arbitrary benevolence, she was on the high road towards making herself hated by her faithful and bewildered subjects when she justified Dr. Schott's forebodings by catching a bad cold, which settled on her chest and kept her in bed for a fortnight.

That was final. The dreadful tedium of those fourteen days,

during which rain and snow fell almost incessantly, the dreary solitude of the huge, draughty building, the absence of incident and of all news of the outer world sufficed to convince the Countess of the absurdity of her experiment, and no sooner was she pronounced fit to travel than she declared her intention of proceeding to Paris. Such news from the outer world as is recorded in the daily papers had, of course, reached her; and it may have been partly in consequence of a leading article in the *Times* that she was seized with a feverish longing to quit her seclusion.

Such, at all events, was the opinion of Bickenbach, to whom the Countess had a habit of imparting occasional half-confidences. Bickenbach, in the estimation of her employer, was a dear old soul, but so stupid that one might safely make use of her, from time to time, as a sort of safety-valve. She was about as serviceable in that capacity as a lap-dog, and many ladies who suffer from the necessity of repressing feelings which nature prompts them to put into words must be aware that a lap-dog is better than nothing. Members of the sterner sex cannot entertain any doubt as to the superiority of a dog (for the special purpose in question) to an old woman, because dogs have the inestimable advantage of being dumb. After what a sadly mistaken fashion the good Baroness saw fit to avail herself of her human faculties has been already related; but in justice to her it must be added that she would have been less indiscreet, had she not become gravely alarmed by the appearance of the Marchese di Leonforte in Paris and by the circumstance that he was admitted once for twice that he was turned away. One may be a stupid old woman, but one has sense enough to understand that alternate snubs and concessions cannot imply total indifference, whatever may be the motive by which they are prompted.

Nevertheless, writing to Douglas Colborne was, no doubt, a clumsy measure to adopt; and it was clumsier still to look so agitated and woebegone, on receiving his discouraging reply, as to attract the notice and the sharp queries of a lady who never allowed herself to be deceived if she could help it. Poor Bickenbach offered a feeble show of resistance, which was speedily overcome, and when she had made a full confession of her sin, she was not spared the rebuke that she merited.

‘You have taken an unpardonable liberty,’ she was told. ‘If anybody but you had dared to do such a thing, there could have been no question of pardon; and even you can only claim to be

excused upon the plea of good intentions and hopeless imbecility. That you should have made me seem to invite him back!—I, who would not for the world permit him to cross my threshold! And he is far too dense and matter-of-fact to believe that you would venture to take a step of that kind without my connivance.'

'But, dear Countess Hélène,' protested the weeping Bickenbach, 'I told him that I was acting entirely upon my own responsibility.'

'Oh, idiot!—as if it mattered what you told him!'

'He is well-born and he is generous; it is impossible that he should have misunderstood me. As impossible,' continued Bickenbach, drying her eyes and taking her courage in both hands, 'as it is for me to misunderstand the danger that you are in. Ah, dear Countess, you cannot deceive one who desires your happiness as ardently as I do! I know where your heart is; I know that you do not love this Italian; but I know the terrible trouble that you may bring upon yourself by your pride; I know that he loves you, and—and I am afraid of him. That is why I wrote to Mr. Colborne.'

The Countess, who had been pacing rapidly up and down the room, now paused in front of her companion, whom she surveyed with a whimsical expression of mingled anger, amusement, and curiosity.

'My good Bickenbach,' she exclaimed, 'you are worth ten times your salary! You really do believe—oh, I can read as much in your candid countenance—that I am in danger of contracting a *liaison* with the Marchese di Leonforte for the purpose of demonstrating to my husband that, although he has forsaken me, there are still a few men left in the world who would not mind being selected to fill his place! If I were to talk from now until this time to-morrow, I could not hope to convey any appreciation to you of your own unconscious humour; but I dare say you are equal to the comprehension of a plain statement of facts; so I will assure you that my heart remains in its normal situation and that Mr. Colborne is no more in possession of it than my *concierge*. Meanwhile, I shall make so bold as to continue receiving such visitors as I may feel inclined to receive. Don't write any more letters, though; a bad joke isn't improved by repetition.'

With that the Countess left the room, holding her head very high. Her mortification was natural enough; still she might very well have afforded to smile at overtures which, however unauthorised and unwarrantable, were scarcely likely to have been

misinterpreted. At the groundless apprehensions of Bickenbach she did contrive to smile; but she was furious against her husband and longed to inflict some swift, sharp chastisement upon him. She did not ask herself for what offence he was to be punished—certainly not for having refused to come to Paris—her only feeling was that she had received a slap in the face, and that no one of her blood had ever submitted tamely to insults. Nothing, of course, could have been more supremely illogical and inconsistent; but we know what the immemorial rights of women are, and the Countess was not the more likely to forego hers because she was emancipated enough to live apart from her husband and to make him (at least nominally) welcome to any satisfaction that he might get out of tying himself to Miss Rowley's apron-string.

When Leonforte called, that afternoon, and had the happiness of being received by a lady who more often than not declined to see him, he was at once struck by a certain change in her aspect and manner. She had more colour than usual; her speech was less languid; she seemed as if she had something to tell him, although for ten minutes she would talk about nothing but commonplaces. Their conversations since he had rejoined her had always been commonplace; nor had he ventured to remove them from that level. He had been very humble, very respectful, very much afraid of being sent about his business. He had felt that it was enough for him to be permitted to bask in the rare smiles vouchsafed to him; he had been in constant terror of hearing that she was about to quit Paris, and had not dared to question her as to her plans, often though he had been tempted to do so. Now, however, he fancied that she would not be greatly displeased if he were to put one question to her, so at length he took courage and put it.

'Will you not tell me what is the matter?' he asked. 'I can see that you are unhappy to-day.'

She laughed. 'Oh, unhappy is a big word. I am not unhappy; but I am annoyed—which is almost as bad, perhaps. It is always annoying to be prevented from carrying out one's little intentions, and I foresee that I shall be prevented from running across to London for a few weeks this year, as I had rather thought of doing. Mr. Colborne is a trifle too conspicuous just at present; I am afraid there would be hardly room for him and me in one metropolis.'

‘How conspicuous?’ inquired the Italian, drawing his straight brows together.

She shrugged her shoulders. ‘As far as my information goes, in every way,’ she replied. ‘He is going to be a great statesman, because in England the highest honours are always conferred upon mediocrity; and he seems to be making himself socially interesting by his attentions to that Miss Rowley whose name I think I mentioned to you at Nice—which is also a common method of acquiring distinction in England. You have no idea what a droll country England is.’

‘I am sure it must be very droll and very interesting,’ said the Marchese rather grimly. He added, after a moment’s pause: ‘I have been thinking of visiting it and making acquaintance with some of its peculiarities.’

‘Really? Well, if you go, you will not be disappointed; for it is quite unique. Shall I give you introductions to some of my friends in London? I can’t offer to introduce you to Mr. Colborne or to Miss Rowley, *bien entendu*; but I can promise you opportunities of meeting them and other people quite as charming as they are. By the way, supposing that you do undertake this trip, perhaps you would kindly go to my house, of which I will give you the address, and bring me back a few *bibelots* that I left there. I will make out a list of them, if it isn’t troubling you too much.’

Leonforte replied gravely that he was as grateful for the honour of being entrusted with any commission by her as he would be for the promised introductions. He went on to say that it would not be his fault if he failed to encounter Mr. Colborne in some public place.

She understood what he meant; she knew very well that his project of visiting England had only been formed within the last few minutes, and she was in no doubt as to his motives for crossing the Channel; but, to make assurance doubly sure, she asked, with a smile: ‘And if you should have the felicity of encountering him?’

The Marchese made no reply, but looked her straight in the face, set his teeth and, gripping his moustache with his left hand, gave it an abrupt upward twirl. The gesture was sufficiently expressive to satisfy her; but she took no notice of it, averted her eyes and yawned.

‘When do you start?’ she asked presently.

‘As soon as you please, madame.’

‘I? Oh, I have nothing to say to your movements; but, if you wish to see London in the height of the season, you had better not lose time. I will send the letters and the little list that I spoke of to your hotel this evening. I am desolated to dismiss you; but I think I must go out for my drive now. You will be so amiable as to collect my small possessions, then, and deliver them to me when we meet again? There is no hurry about it.’

‘Shall I find you here on my return?’ asked the Marchese anxiously.

‘If you don’t, you can leave the packet with the *concierge*. In all probability, however, I shall be here for another month, since London has been made impossible for me. Good-bye; amuse yourself well!’

That was all that passed between them; and if she would have repudiated with scorn and laughter the accusation that she had suborned an assassin, she was none the less aware that she had done something almost as mediæval. Unquestionably this Sicilian admirer of hers would seize the first opportunity that offered of publicly insulting her husband; but what then? Englishmen do not fight duels, nor could anything come of the projected meeting except an ignoble *fracas*. That, however, was just what she wanted. Douglas might escape wounds; but he would not be able to escape ridicule, he would not be able to escape the satirical comments which were sure to find their way into the newspapers, and he would probably be driven to recognise the expediency of dropping his intimacy with Miss Rowley. When one wishes to be avenged upon one’s adversary one should seek for his vulnerable point, and she felt certain that Douglas, like the rest of his cold-blooded race, would prefer almost any form of castigation to that of being laughed at. She wanted, in short, to make him smart, and she thought that she had hit upon a tolerably efficacious method of accomplishing her purpose.

She returned from her drive in such a much better humour than she had manifested of late that, in the course of the evening, the penitent Bickenbach felt encouraged to revert to a delicate subject and to express a timid hope that her interference had been forgiven.

‘You are absolutely forgiven,’ was the Countess’s gratifying reply; ‘you are a great deal too entertaining to be quarrelled with. Added to which, your counsels are quite unexceptionably excellent,

and I appreciate the full force of them. I can't very well compel my husband to come to Paris against his will, can I? But I have done the next best thing; I have sent the dangerously fascinating Marchese away.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS.

THE more Douglas Colborne thought of it the more he felt convinced that he had acted quite rightly in replying as he had done to the Baroness von Bickenbach's appeal. He could not possibly have gone to Paris; nor could he have hoped to do the slightest good to himself or anybody else by taking such a step. Nevertheless, he had half expected to receive some further communication from the Baroness, and was more than half disappointed at her silence. Was he also to remain silent, and thus acquiesce tacitly in a state of things which, after all, seemed to touch his honour somewhat closely? It is not impossible that he might have ended by putting his pride in his pocket and taking a return ticket for Paris, had he not been so busy, and had he not been perpetually reminded of what he owed to himself by the solicitations of his mother. Mrs. Colborne, who had written three times to the Countess without getting any answer from her correspondent, was becoming fidgety. She told Douglas that people were beginning to talk, that things really could not go on like this much longer, and that, in her opinion, it was high time for him to tender the olive-branch, since there seemed to be no immediate probability of its being tendered to him by his wife. When he observed in reply that he believed his wife had quitted the regions in which the olive flourishes, she said rather tartly that the subject was not one to be treated flippantly.

'No one,' she declared, 'can be more averse to interference than I am, and you cannot say that I have interfered with you hitherto; but I should not be doing my duty as your mother if I did not warn you against supineness. A time always comes when some definite arrangement has to be made; I hear remarks which you naturally don't hear, and it is very evident to me that, if a reconciliation is to be effected at all, it ought to be effected at once. Two or three months hence you will find it ten times more difficult to manage, you may be sure.'

This, no doubt, was true; but he did not anticipate a reconciliation, and he could not explain to his mother, with any hope of being understood, all the reasons that he had for disbelieving in his power to bring about such a happy event. All that Mrs. Colborne gained by her intervention was to confirm him in his resolution to sit still behind his entrenchments and to imbue him with a taste for lunching at his club. As for dinner, he always attended a dinner-party during that period when he did not dine at the House.

Now, it came to pass that, as he was sitting down, one day, to his modest mutton-chop and pint of claret in the dining-room of the club to which he belonged, another member of that club stepped up and urbanely proposed to share his table with him. Lord Burcote was not often seen in the establishment alluded to and had probably never before in his life tested its culinary capabilities; so Douglas, who was aware of this, felt justified in assuming that the very smartly dressed old gentleman who took a chair and ordered 'whatever there is going' must have something rather particular to say to him. And it turned out, after a quarter of an hour had been spent in irrelevant amenities, that he was not mistaken.

Lord Burcote had the name of being an able diplomatist and had done something to earn his reputation: it was, perhaps, even in some degree owing to his known willingness to undertake delicate jobs that he could always count upon obtaining some more or less ornamental post when his party was in power. He was not much of a speaker and he was a great deal too lazy to be placed in charge of an important department; but he was well acquainted with the ins and outs of political life and he had frequently rendered good service in arranging combinations and composing differences. There was a prevalent impression amongst certain influential personages that Mr. Douglas Colborne was a ticklish sort of customer to deal with; and that was one reason—it was not the only reason, but influential personages knew nothing of any other—why the Right Honourable the Earl of Burcote was partaking of an indifferently-cooked meal and was paying the prettiest compliments that he could think of to one whose recent conduct had evinced scant consideration for the convenience of the existing Government. In this instance, however, he might have spared himself the trouble of stringing together flattering phrases which Douglas, who was no fool, accepted precisely for

what they were worth. The latter, after the flattering phrases had slid by degrees into tentative suggestions, ended by laughing and saying :

‘Hadn’t we better speak more plainly, Lord Burcote? I’m quite ready to be open with you, if you will be open with me. Only first I should like to know whether you have been formally commissioned to sound me or not.’

‘Oh, my dear fellow, I needn’t tell you that nobody is ever formally commissioned to do that kind of thing. I can’t say more than that poor Palairot’s death will entail certain promotions and vacancies and that your name has been mentioned in connection with one of the vacancies.’

‘With which of them?’ Douglas inquired.

‘Not with one more than with another; we can’t tell as yet what they may be. Only I think I may venture to assure you that you can have office if you choose to take it; and, as a friend, I should strongly advise you not to be too obstinate or too exacting. Come,’ added Lord Burcote, with a good-humoured laugh; ‘you don’t quite expect Cabinet rank yet, I suppose!’

‘No; but I don’t want to be compelled to resign, and I don’t know how far subordinate members of a Ministry are usually taken into the confidence of their chiefs.’

Lord Burcote made a grimace and threw up his hands. ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘you want to be Prime Minister, that’s quite clear! I’m sure I hope you may be, one of these fine days; but, my dear fellow, you never will be if you fancy that taking a seat on the top of a coach means grabbing hold of the reins. Oh, dear no! People who behave in that way get chucked off, neck and crop, into the ditch—and serve ’em right! For Heaven’s sake, don’t give us all the affliction of seeing such a first-rate man as you are in that melancholy predicament!’

Lord Burcote proceeded to draw forth from the treasure-house of his experience many wordly-wise sayings which were not inappropriate nor without effect upon the mind of his hearer. It was true enough that, as he said, being placed on the staff is not quite the same thing as directing operations: besides, he was able to give satisfactory assurances in reply to one or two queries which Douglas felt it indispensable to put. He represented, moreover, that there was plenty of time for consideration, as several weeks must probably elapse before a formal proposition could be made; and the upshot of a prolonged conversation was that Douglas

thought he might now face Peggy Rowley without fear of rebuke, while his lordship inwardly congratulated himself upon having discharged his mission with success.

By this time the two high contracting parties had finished their luncheon and had adjourned to the smoking-room. It was merely as an apparent afterthought, before rising to depart, that Lord Burcote remarked carelessly :

‘By the way, what about that young cousin of yours?—the fellow with the tenor voice, who is going to sing at the Duchess of Brentford’s, you know. Is it true that you have adopted him—made him your heir, and all that? People are saying that you have done something of the kind.’

‘The people who are saying that must know a good deal more than I know,’ answered Douglas, looking his interlocutor full in the face. ‘It isn’t very usual for a married man of my age to adopt collaterals, is it? But perhaps the people of whom you speak don’t look upon me as being so very much a married man.’

‘Oh, I know nothing at all about that,’ said Lord Burcote, jumping up and searching for his hat. ‘One has heard rumours—of course there are always bound to be rumours—but I’m delighted if there’s no truth in them. And indeed the matter doesn’t concern me in any way, except in so far as that the young man is constantly coming to our house to rehearse with one of my daughters, who is to take part in the play, and naturally he meets other young women there. One feels a certain responsibility—at least, I dare say Lady Burcote does—and that was why I asked. I understand then, that the whole story is a *canard*?’

‘All marriageable young women would do well to treat it as such,’ replied Douglas gravely. ‘You seem to be aware, and it isn’t worth while to deny, that I am not very likely, as matters stand at present, to have a son, and, if I never have a son, Frank Innes has as good a chance as anybody else of stepping into my shoes when I die; but I am not many years older than he is, you see.’

‘Oh, nobody will begin to speculate upon your death until the next century is well on its way; only, if you had really thought of adopting young Innes—not that it would have been at all a prudent thing to do—you would probably have contemplated making some provision for him during your lifetime, that’s all.’

‘For the moment, I don’t contemplate any arrangement of the sort,’ answered Douglas. And after the sprightly old nobleman

had left him, he thought to himself: 'That was a queer hint! What can the girl have done that her people should dream of marrying her to a man who, even if I were to drop down dead to-morrow, would be a poor match for her? It isn't for the sake of Frank's *beaux yeux* or for the sake of any allowance that I should be able to afford him, that that old fox would accept him as a son-in-law. Anyhow, it would never have done for me to commit myself.'

He was certainly right to abstain from committing himself; but his suspicions, as it happened, were unjust to Lord Burcote, who was a good-natured man and who saw things which his wife did not deign to see. Lord Burcote knew, or thought he knew, very well that his daughter would have sufficient strength of mind to resist the renewed advances of Lord Galashiels, and he also knew, or thought he knew, upon whom her young affections had been bestowed. He was fond of the girl and would have been glad to do her a good turn, had such a thing been within the range of possibilities; and, assuming that she wouldn't take Galashiels, Frank Innes might, he had thought, be brought just within that range. A couple of thousand a year, duly secured, would have done it—not, indeed, without a row; still the thing could have been done at that figure. As, however, Colborne had no generous intentions, there was nothing more to be said. It was a pity; but it couldn't be helped. Perhaps, after all, it wasn't such a great pity; for love-matches are leaps in the dark, at best, and Florry, with her pretty face and her high connections, ought to end by securing a husband possessed of more solid and durable advantages than the heir-presumptive to Stoke Leighton could boast of.

With such philosophical musings Lord Burcote beguiled the way as he walked towards Eaton Square, and he had recovered all his accustomed cheerfulness by the time that he reached his own doorstep, whence a tall, swarthy man, who looked like a foreigner, had just been turned away. He glanced at the stranger, without addressing him, taking it for granted that he was some *attaché* or other who had been dropping a card; but the stranger paused, removed his hat, and said, in correct, laborious English:

'I have perhaps the honour to see Lord Burcote? Yes? I come from leaving with your servants my card—the Marchese di Leonforte—together with a letter of introduction from the Countess Radna, who has been so amiable as to present me in that way to some of her English friends.'

‘Delighted, I’m sure!’ answered Lord Burcote, who did not, for the moment, recall the lady’s name. Then, making a successful demand upon the memory of which, like most public personages, he was rather proud—‘Oh, the Countess Radna; yes, yes, to be sure—Colborne’s wife! Sorry we haven’t seen her in London this year, but only too happy to welcome any friend of hers. What can we do for you, I wonder? Will you waive ceremony and dine quietly with us this evening at half-past eight? I can’t tell you whom you will meet; but I know there are a few people coming. Just now one has so many engagements that one is obliged to catch one’s friends when one can, and I’m afraid you might call here a dozen times without finding my wife at home.’

Lord Burcote was liked even by those who most strongly disapproved of him. He could scarcely be said to exemplify the continental conception of a *grand seigneur*; yet there was something about his easy, unaffected manner which was an evidence of good breeding, and was at once recognised as such by the Italian, whose own manner was so very unlike it. Leonforte smiled gravely, while expressing his thanks for an invitation which he said that he had all the more pleasure in accepting because its informality rendered it doubly kind and flattering. He thought as he walked away that, if all Englishmen resembled his prospective host, a short stay in London might not be altogether unpleasant—though indeed it was not in search of pleasure that his journey had been undertaken.

He reappeared in Eaton Square precisely as the clock struck half-past eight, which seemed to him a very extraordinary hour at which to dine; but it was only at a quarter to nine that Lady Burcote hurried into the drawing-room, fastening her bracelets and apologising for having kept him waiting, nor was he permitted to satisfy the cravings of a healthy appetite until another quarter of an hour had elapsed. However, his dinner, when at length he obtained it, was excellent; and so, he thought, was the company. He had never been able to feel at home in Nice or Paris; but these people, although they differed in some respects even more strikingly than the French from his own nation, conveyed to him the impression that they neither regarded him nor wished to treat him as an alien. They made no effort to suit themselves to him, but evidently expected that he would endeavour to suit himself to them—which is perhaps the most friendly method of displaying hospitality. Most of them, so far as he could gather, were related to

his host and hostess ; they were very merry and seemed to have a great deal to say to one another, as well as to him ; his imperfect acquaintance with the language prevented him from following the drift of more than a quarter of their observations ; but he liked very well to sit among them and watch them ; he paid the tribute of an unrestricted admiration to the women, all of whom were pretty and well-dressed, while the men, too, were not far from realising his ideal of what men ought to be.

One of the latter walked round the table and sat down beside him, after the ladies, in accordance with the ungallant British fashion, had withdrawn. This was a young fellow, whose blue eyes, curly hair, and open countenance did not fail to prepossess Leonforte, like the rest of the world, in his favour. He said, without any preliminary ceremonies :

‘You’re a friend of the Countess Radna’s, aren’t you ? Do tell me all about her, and, if you correspond with her, give her my love when you write. She was awfully kind to me last year, and she won’t have forgotten me. My name is Innes ; perhaps she may have mentioned me to you ?’

The Marchese replied with his customary gravity, though with a slight smile beneath his black moustache, that he had not the honour of being in correspondence with the Countess Radna, and that he did not remember to have heard her speak of Mr. Innes.

‘But,’ he added, ‘I can well believe that she was kind to you, sir ; because she is kind to everybody. I myself owe my life, in all probability, to her kindness ; for I was very nearly killed by an accident at her door during the winter, and if she had not received me into her house and nursed me, I should not, perhaps, have been here at this moment.’

‘Oh, I’m sure she would be only too glad to do anything that she could for you,’ said Frank. ‘She’s a cousin of mine, you know—or, at least, her husband is. And, between you and me, I think the only person to whom she hasn’t been over and above kind is that same husband of hers, who is one of the very best fellows in the world. Of course you know that she and he are not upon particularly good terms at present.’

The Marchese drew himself up and intimated rather stiffly that he was aware of the unhappy fact alluded to. He hoped he might be excused for doubting whether the breach had been caused by any lack of kindness on the Countess’s part, and, from what he had heard, he feared that it was irremediable.

'Not a bit of it!' returned Frank cheerfully; 'it's only a stupid misunderstanding. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll introduce you to Douglas Colborne, and you can have a talk with him. You must come to the Duchess of Brentford's theatricals—there's no invitation required, because it's a charity affair—and I know Douglas means to be present. He's such a busy man nowadays that one hardly knows how or where to get hold of him; but he has promised to come and hear us squall, and, with a little tact and diplomacy, you know, you ought to be able to do both him and the Countess a service. You can buy your ticket from Lady Burcote.'

Somebody drew Frank's attention away at this moment; so that a conversation was broken off which Leonforte would fain have continued a little longer; but in the course of the evening the latter acted upon the suggestion made to him and purchased a ticket for the Duchess's theatricals from his hostess. He certainly wanted to meet Mr. Colborne; but he was not equally certain as to what he intended to do when the meeting should take place. He hardly knew what to make of these English people. He liked them; but they puzzled him with their good humour, their levity, and their *insouciance*. Lady Burcote said a few words to him about the Countess, regretting her disappearance from London society and hoping that she did not propose to exile herself permanently, but did not seem to see anything worthy of remark in the Countess's separation from her husband. She had nothing but praises to bestow upon Mr. Colborne, who, she said, was already famous and was going to be more so—thanks, chiefly, to the exertions of Miss Rowley.

'Peggy Rowley,' she explained, 'is a power in the land. I can't exactly tell you why, because you are a foreigner and you wouldn't understand; but so it is, and, luckily for Mr. Colborne, she is a warm partisan of his. Oh, no; nothing of that kind,' added Lady Burcote, in response to a mute interrogation which the Marchese's Italian caution would not suffer him to express verbally; 'Peggy doesn't go in for those little games. She might have married a hundred times over; but I suppose she prefers her liberty, and, for some reason or other, politics amuse her. She would be the last woman in the world to get herself into trouble with a married man.'

All this was rather bewildering to a hot-blooded, self-restrained Sicilian, who had expected to find that what was so important to

him would have some importance in the eyes of others, and who was reluctantly compelled to admit the conjecture that the infamous Colborne might not, after all, be quite as infamous as he had been painted. However, he resolved to postpone any decision as to ultimate tactics until he should have met his enemy face to face—which, under the circumstances, was doubtless the most sensible resolution that he could have made.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT BRENTFORD HOUSE.

FRANK INNES forgot all about the Marchese di Leonforte as soon as he lost sight of that gentleman. Indeed, it says something for the young fellow's kindness of heart that he should have been able at this time to bestow even a passing thought upon his cousin's affairs, considering the very important crisis which he felt that his own were about to reach. Lady Burcote's contemptuous disregard of such small fry as Government clerks had rendered it possible for him to arrive at a greater degree of intimacy with her daughter than would have been permitted, had he been a sprig of nobility, possessed of a limited income. He had been made free of the house in Eaton Square and had availed himself of his privileges to such good purpose that Lady Florence could not, he was sure, be in any doubt now as to the sentiments with which she had inspired him. Whether those sentiments were reciprocated or not was, however, quite another question. So far, the girl had certainly given him no excuse for flattering himself that they were; although she had been very candid and confidential with him, telling him, in the course of their frequent conversations, how heavily her mother's tyranny weighed upon her, and drawing no veil over the strong personal repugnance that she felt for Lord Galashiels, who, she feared, was not disposed to take no for an answer.

Lord Galashiels—instigated, it may be, by hints proceeding from an influential quarter—had resumed his visits to Eaton Square and availed himself of Lord Burcote's proffered hospitality almost as often as his humble competitor did. He could hardly be said to have renewed his attentions to Lady Florence; but that was only because he deemed it good policy, for the time being, to

be distant and sulky in his demeanour towards her. He thought she ought to be made to understand that playing fast and loose with a man of his wealth and position was a dangerous form of relaxation, and that she must take the trouble to beckon him back if she wished him to overlook the past and assume the attitude of a suppliant once more. He was not in the least afraid of Frank Innes, in whom his exhaustive knowledge of feminine nature had enabled him to discern a mere decoy duck, nor did he deign to distress himself about a flirtation which, as we have seen, had caused some passing anxiety and regret to Lord Burcote.

On the other hand, Frank Innes was a good deal afraid of him, and had, in truth, plausible reasons for being so. Everybody said that Lady Florence was destined eventually to become Lady Galashiels; Peggy Rowley assured him again and again that the betrothal was as certain to come about as the sun was to go on rising and setting until the end of time; Lady Florence herself did not appear to think that there was much use in struggling against the inevitable, notwithstanding the detestation that she professed for her rejected suitor. Meanwhile, the period during which it might be held permissible for him to demand daily interviews with her was drawing rapidly towards its close; when once the Duchess of Brentford's entertainment should have passed into the category of by-gones he himself would probably share the same deplorable fate; in short, he must make his attempt without loss of time, or else practically abandon the hope of ever being able to make it at all.

Well, it was but a forlorn hope that he entertained; still it was considerably less forlorn than it had been earlier in the year. He had no right to imagine that Lady Florence loved him; but she had given him every right to believe that she liked him very much; and, as far as the earning of money was concerned, his prospects were fairly bright. He knew now, upon the best authority, that his voice was one of a rare quality and that he had a career before him if he chose to pursue it. It would, of course, be vain to look for anything but strenuous opposition from Lord and Lady Burcote; but he did not think it likely that aristocratic prejudice would deter Lady Florence from accepting a man for whom she cared, merely because he derived his income from singing in public. And, supposing that she had courage enough to defy her parents, why shouldn't her parents be successfully defied?

The upshot of these self-communings was that, on the appointed evening, Frank betook himself, in a frame of mind at once resolute and excited, to Brentford House, where the first person whom he recognised amongst the assembled audience was his cousin Douglas, while the second was the Marchese di Leonforte. That reminded him of his promise to make the two men known to one another, and, as the proceedings were to open with a short piece during which his presence behind the scenes was not required, he thought he could not do better than perform the ceremony of introduction at once. He therefore greeted Leonforte and, without entering into any explanation, drew him forward by the arm to the row of chairs upon one of which Douglas was seated.

‘How are you, Douglas?’ said he. ‘Let me introduce the Marchese di Leonforte, who has just arrived from Paris and wants to make your acquaintance. He is a friend of the Countess’s.’

With the complacent conviction that he had thus acquitted himself as neatly as possible of a delicate task, Frank retired, leaving two sorely embarrassed gentlemen behind him. Douglas was naturally somewhat more taken aback than the Italian, having had no previous warning of the pleasure in store for him; but he had presence of mind enough to bow and make the customary polite mutter. That was, in fact, the only course open to him at such a time and place; though the rapid survey which he took of his reputed supplanter (who struck him as abominably handsome and romantic-looking) caused him for one moment to wish that their meeting could have occurred elsewhere and under less sophisticated conditions. Leonforte, for his part, was both agreeably and disagreeably impressed by the aspect of the personage whom he had so often anathematised. He had expected to encounter a cynical, middle-aged individual with a bald head, cold blue eyes, and a sneering manner: what he actually beheld was a pleasant, honest-looking young man, who had coloured slightly and who did not seem to be altogether free from the shyness of boyhood. It was a little awkward and bewildering to be confronted at last with the enemy in so unforeseen a shape, and the Marchese could think of nothing better to say to him than:

‘I must apologise to you, sir; the kindness of Mr. Innes has led him to make a statement which is inexact. I beg you to believe that I did not request this honour.’

Douglas smiled and answered that there was no need for apologies. He did not quite understand what the other meant by

assuming an air of such portentous solemnity ; but he was determined to ignore any cause for mutual dislike that might exist between them ; so he added : ‘ I think Frank said you were a friend of my wife’s ? ’

‘ I have the privilege to be numbered amongst the Countess Radna’s friends,’ replied the Marchese very stiffly—for, somehow or other, he felt it to be an intolerable piece of impudence on the Englishman’s part to speak of the Countess in that familiar way. ‘ It is even because I am so far privileged that I could not truly have described myself as anxious to make your acquaintance, Mr. Colborne. Excuse the freedom of my confession.’

Now, really such freedom of speech was quite inexcusable, and it was impossible to suppose that a total stranger who permitted himself to use it could have intended it to be anything else. Douglas was forced to the conclusion that the man wished to pick a quarrel with him : all he could do was to imply by his response that the occasion was ill-chosen, but that he would be as ready as anybody else to resent an affront, should some more fitting opportunity be accorded to him for doing so. He therefore said :

‘ Perhaps I have mistaken your meaning ; but you will admit, in any case, that I, on my side, have not sought your acquaintance. I am afraid all these seats are already engaged ; but if it should suit your convenience to call upon me at any time, this is my address.’

Thereupon he handed his card to the Marchese, who took it, with a low bow, and fell back. He was quite unaware that he had, according to the Continental code of manners, taken the first step towards the arrangement of a hostile meeting ; and, as the curtain rose at this moment, he endeavoured to concentrate his attention upon the stage and forget an episode which had very nearly made him lose his temper.

The amateur performers whose modest mission it was to keep the early arrivals amused would probably have fallen a little short of success, so far as Mr. Colborne was concerned, had he been left to their uncovenanted mercies ; but they had not stumbled through many speeches of their opening dialogue when a more effectual diversion was created for him by the advent of two ladies who, it appeared, had secured the neighbouring chairs. Miss Spofforth, as a matter of course, took the more remote one, while Peggy Rowley, placing herself at his elbow, remarked :

‘ Well this is luck ! I hardly expected to see you here, and I

certainly didn't expect to have you as a neighbour. I've been dying to congratulate you ever since I heard that it was all right and that you won't refuse to be made a Privy Councillor.'

'One can't refuse what hasn't been offered yet,' returned Douglas, laughing.

'Oh, dear, yes, one can; and you are just the sort of cantankerous being to do it. I don't mind telling you now that I have had some horrible misgivings; thank goodness, they were uncalled-for! The importance of the office isn't the question, you know; an Under-Secretaryship will answer all your purpose, and it will be nobody's fault but your own if you are not in the next Cabinet.'

'In the next?'

'Or in the one after. If the next Ministry is to be a Radical one—which is by no means proved—it won't be in power for six months. Then will come the usual necessity for the infusion of new blood, and you will step into your proper position. Don't try to look as if you didn't care: nothing infuriates me so much as affectation.'

He did, of course, care, and he had no desire to appear affected; although there were other things which were of greater consequence to him than political achievements. However, he could not speak of these other things to Peggy Rowley, who was scarcely as sympathetic with regard to them as she might have been; so he lent a not unwilling ear to her flattering prognostications and admired, as he had done a hundred times before, the shrewdness which enabled her to discern the true situation of public affairs. What she could not discern (because nobody can) was the verdict likely to be returned at the next general election by the silent masses who are our rulers; but she had theories upon the subject, as everybody has, and it was both interesting and amusing to hear her state them. If she did not contrive to persuade him that the vast majority of Englishmen are Conservatives at heart and would end by following his lead, she enabled him, at all events, to forget the vexatious behaviour of a certain foreigner, while neither he nor she were disturbed for a moment by the progress of the little drama which was being enacted for their benefit.

Leonforte, sitting a few yards behind the pair, watched them with curiosity and was as oblivious as they were of the circumstance that an exceedingly funny exhibition of the histrionic art was taking place upon the stage. What in the world was he to do with this apparently straightforward and unimpassioned Briton?

At the bottom of his heart he wanted to think badly of the man, and he was provoked at being furnished with no plausible excuse for thinking badly of him. *Faute de mieux*, the most had to be made of the absorbing interest which Mr. Colborne evidently took in his colloquy with Miss Rowley, and, as Leonforte had a Southerner's aptitude for seeing what he wished to see, he soon contrived to work himself up into a state of righteous wrath over a non-existent flirtation. That Mr. Colborne should pay attention thus publicly and undisguisedly to another woman was a direct insult to the Countess Radna; and for what purpose was the Marchese in England if not for the purpose of avenging insults offered to the absent and innocent lady? He thought of this, and of how perfectly easy it would be, in any other country but England, to provoke a duel with the materials which were at his disposal; but he likewise reflected that, after he should have fought with his antagonist and wounded him (for it would, of course, be a very great mistake to kill him), he would not have advanced much farther towards the attainment of the object which he had in view. It would be pleasant to pose as the Countess's champion and it would be pleasant to inflict condign punishment upon the offender; but, unfortunately, no punishment, however severe, could avail to sever the bonds which united her to her lawful husband. A wiser plan, no doubt, would be to forego the satisfaction of personal revenge and, by means of diplomacy, to bring her erring husband to terms.

While the Sicilian was taking counsel with himself after this astute but slightly antiquated fashion, the first piece had come to an end, the room had become full to overflowing, and the operetta which was destined to bring far-reaching renown to Frank Innes had begun. The truth was that Frank knew very well how important it was that he should achieve an indubitable success that evening, and had resolved to achieve it. The occasion was not a private one; representatives of the press, musical critics, and professional singers were present; some of them would say, while others would print, what their impressions of him were; and, should the general verdict be favourable, his future would be no longer a question of possibility, but of certainty. Happily for him, he was free from that absurd affliction of nervousness which handicaps most of us in these over-civilised days; and so it came to pass that long before the curtain fell, the fact had been established that there existed in London a young man whose vocal

powers and technical education rendered him worth his full weight in gold. He so completely outshone his fellow-actors and actresses that these scarcely obtained the recognition due to their merits; although Lady Florence, who had sung very nicely indeed, was called before the curtain and presented with bouquets. Not only was Frank the hero of the evening, but he was assured, immediately upon the conclusion of the performance, that he might, if he pleased, be the hero of the next and of many subsequent seasons. Definite proposals were made to him and definite undertakings urged upon him—for indeed there are very few tenors in the world.

The young man did not lose his head in the intoxication of a triumph which he had partially foreseen; he refused to bind himself by any rash promises upon the spur of the moment; he did not even determine finally—although he had almost determined—to resign his paltry Government clerkship and make his fortune by a quicker and more fascinating method. There are fortunes other than pecuniary to be made or marred by hasty action, and it was obviously essential that he should ascertain first of all what were Lady Florence's views upon the whole subject.

He found her, after he had at length shaken off his assiduous admirers and tempters, talking to Lord Galashiels, who, instead of departing with the rest of the audience, had come behind the scenes in order to assure her in person of the complete satisfaction with which he had listened to her.

'Innes was not bad—not at all bad,' Frank heard him saying; 'but, after all, one can't help looking upon male songsters as rather muffs. Besides, at the best of times, a man's voice isn't at all the same thing as a woman's voice—is it now?'

'Has anybody ever asserted that it was?' Lady Florence inquired. 'It may be a much better thing, though; and, as a matter of fact, Mr. Innes can beat me at singing with almost as much ridiculous ease as he can beat you at running.'

Lord Galashiels was precluded from making any rejoinder to this uncivil speech; for, before he could think of an appropriate one, Lady Florence had caught sight of Frank Innes and had hastily quitted his side. She beckoned the young man into the slips, where they were at least temporarily secure from interruption; she was somewhat flushed and excited, as was but natural, considering all things, and she was probably aware that only a few minutes would be granted to her in which to convey her congratulations to her late coadjutor.

‘I’m glad everything has gone off so splendidly,’ she concluded by saying, ‘and I hope you are pleased with us all for having done our little best; still I’m rather sorry that we have got to the end and the finish of the whole business. One won’t see you any more now, I suppose.’

‘You’ll see just as much of me as you want to see,’ was Frank’s emphatic reply. ‘The only question is whether you won’t, perhaps, see a little more.’

‘Oh, I don’t think there’s much fear of that. You will call and we shall be out; possibly—though I have my doubts about it—you will be asked to dinner once; then, towards the end of July, you will call again and we shall be out again—and that will be all.’

‘Mayn’t I call when there is some reasonable prospect of your being at home?’ asked Frank.

‘Of course you may; only I hardly know when that will be; we have such a heap of engagements. To-morrow afternoon I believe we shall be at home until about six o’clock, when mamma has to go and present prizes to some volunteer corps or other.’

‘And do you go with her?’

‘Yes, unless I have a headache—as I most likely shall, after my exertions this evening. Now I must rush off and change my clothes. If you see Lord Galashiels, please tell him that I have left: it would be just like him to wait for me.’

If this was not plain and direct encouragement, nothing that a young woman can permissibly say to a potential wooer ought to be so regarded. Frank Innes was not more conceited than his neighbours; but he ventured to interpret Lady Florence’s words in that sense, and it will surely be conceded that he had a fair right to build certain ambitious castles in the air as he drove away towards his club, after receiving the Duchess of Brentford’s thanks and the cordial felicitations of Lady Burcote.

(To be continued.)



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FANCY DRESSES DESCRIBED;

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By ARDERN HOLT.

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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY 1898.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN THE OFFICE.

THE town of Liskeard is a strange one. The first question the visitor asks is: 'What can have brought it there?' It does not occupy the ridge or spur of a hill, as one that has gathered round a border castle; it does not occupy a valley by a river, as one that has nestled about an abbey; it is not planted at a convergence of roads, as one that lives and thrives on commerce. It consists of a multitude of houses tumbled promiscuously over steep hill and narrow dale, so that the chimneys of one house throw their smoke in at the windows of another, and a street is as contorted laterally as a letter S, and undulates vertically as a switch-back railway.

The reason why Liskeard is a town, and was planted where it is, must be sought down a narrow lane that leads to a great unfailing, limpid spring pouring forth a flood of the purest water through four orifices. The old British saints loved to settle by springs of water, and there is hardly a church in Cornwall that is not associated with a holy well. No well in the county is so copious, so constant in its unfailing supply as that of Liskeard. It may have received divine homage in pagan times; it certainly received veneration by some shaggy Keltic hermit; he settled by miracles with its water, and his cell became the nucleus

In an old slated house in one of the tortuous streets of Liskeard lived Mr. Physic, solicitor and property agent. Anyone who has been into a lawyer's office anywhere in that world that supports lawyers knows them all. They are as alike as dried peas. Some have more iron cases, lettered with the initials or names of clients, than have others, some have the table more littered with correspondence and half-endorsed deeds than others, but all have the same look, the same smell, the same character.

Mr. Physic had just risen from his desk to take some midday refreshment—a glass of sherry and sandwiches—when the clerk showed in Mr. Pike, the horsebreaker.

‘How d’y do?’ said the agent cheerily. ‘And how’s the missus and all the babbies?’

‘Very well, thank you, sir, very well. We’re all tough, thanks be.’

‘Take a chair,’ said Physic; ‘come at an opportune moment. Just had my humble lunch brought in. Let me pour you out a glass of sherry.’

‘No, thank you, sir,’ said the horsebreaker, taking a seat. He wanted a glass of wine, he intended to have it, but he knew what good manners were, and required to be pressed.

‘Now, come,’ said the solicitor. ‘You have been engaged with a skittish horse, I can see; look a little pulled about, you do. By name I am allied to the medical profession, so let me prescribe.’

‘Thank you, sir, I feel hearty. I never drink before I eat.’

‘Then eat, Pike, at once. Here are sandwiches.’

‘I wouldn’t deprive you.’

‘Not deprive me at all. I will ring for more. Now, a glass?’ holding the decanter in the position of the earth as it rotates round the sun.

‘I really had rather not.’

‘Half a glass?’

‘Well, then, as you are so pressing, half a glass.’

‘Very well, only a half.’

So Mr. Physic filled it, not so as to run over; that made half a glass; a glass that overflows is a whole glass. After Pike had eaten a sandwich and drunk his glass, the agent put his head on one side and said suppliantly: ‘Come, let me pour you out another.’

‘Not on any account.’

‘I insist.’

‘Well, there is a crumb in my windpipe—a drop—not above a drop.’

So his glass was replenished.

'Now, then,' said Physic, 'what is the business, Pike?' But just as the lawyer had hung back before asking this question, so now did the horsebreaker hang back from answering it.

'Look there,' said Pike, pointing to a dog on the mat by the fireplace. 'That poor brute has got the distemper. I'll tell you what you should do with her. Give her some wine. She's running at the eyes and nose. If you don't take care you'll lose her. Give her sherry with syrup of squills and camphor water. That will bring her round like the minute-hand of a clock.'

'I'll do it,' said Physic. 'Now to business. I'm your man.'

'You don't notice any smell, do you?' asked the horsebreaker.

'No, Pike; why?'

'Because there's a man selling real fresh bloaters, and I bought a few and have them here. My wife can't touch red salt herrings; they give her heartburn. But the real fresh bloater is another thing. The man has a cartload. I'd have more if I wasn't riding.'

'Well; now to business.'

'Very well, sir.' Pike touched his forehead. 'It's only about a little field and a stable, you know, sir, that Matthew Kneebone had.'

'Oh, you can't have those; they are to be thrown into Philip Downe's lot.'

'It would be uncommon convenient for me.'

'Convenient or not, it can't be helped. I believe Mr. Curgenven has as much as promised it.'

'But I want a paddock, and that stable comes in terrible handy for me.'

'There are difficulties.'

'I dare say there be. But I want that paddock and linney uncommon bad. And, look here, Lawyer Physic, I don't mind a couple of guineas; and I'll give you a bit of advice as may be useful.'

'Oh, advice!'

'Why I reckon if I come to you for advice I have to pay six-and-eight for it.'

'Yes, but I am a solicitor.'

'Well, and I am a man who has his eyes and ears open. And the bit o' advice I can give you may be worth many scores of six-and-eightpences. Take the two guineas'—he put the money, two sovereigns and two shillings, on the table—'and my advice, which

is worth more nor that, and manage for me the paddock and the stable.'

'Very well, then,' said Physic, drawing the money to him. 'Now for the advice.'

'They say you're going to open a mine at Tolmenna.'

'Yes, I am.'

'You'll like to go there and look about, and see how the mine gets along.'

'Of course.'

'Then I just wouldn't.'

'Why so?'

'Well, you shouldn't go without someone to go along with you. There's that ould chap Morideg, as you sent to prison and turned out o' his house. He ain't gone so terrible far. He's at that wisht place now, Smallacomb, by the Trewartha Marsh. Farmer Hockin have let'n into an ou'd linney there.'

'And what if he have?'

'Well, he don't look on you with a very loving eye. He's an ignorant man; he's knocked you down once, and he says, says he, give him a chance, and he'll finish you some day. I'd keep off the moors if I was you, Lawyer, for a bit. Mebbe Morideg 'll move further off. As long as he's near, and his heart of a blaze wi' wrongs, if I was you, Lawyer Physic, I'd just keep to the roads and lanes, and not show my head on the moor.'

'If he attempted to lay but a finger on me——'

'I don't reckon he'll lay a finger on you, sir; but he might hap accidental, when you was by, to lay a finger on the trigger of his old gun. He's a cruel good shot, folks say.'

Physic's face turned white.

'I'm really much obliged,' he said. 'I really am. You shall have the paddock and linney. I'll tell the squire they were promised to you before Downe applied.'

'No offence, sir. You don't happen to have an axe or a chopper here, do you?'

'I cannot say I have. Why?'

'Because, Lawyer Physic, if you had, I'd say, put it in the corner, and turn 'n with the blade upperways to cut the ill wish.'

'What ill wish?'

'The old woman, Mrs. Morideg. Her's got the evil eye, and her has ill-wished you afore a score o' people. It's sure to come on you unless you cut it off wi' a hatchet, as I said.'

'I'll risk that, Pike.' Then, as a tap came at his door, in a loud tone: 'Come in!'

'Mrs. Curgenven,' said the clerk. 'Are you engaged, sir?'

'For Mrs. Curgenven, at her service. By-bye, Pike, you shall have the—you know what; and I'll remember what you said.'

As Theresa came in: 'How do you do, my dear madam? What an honour! What a pleasure! Allow me to ring for another glass and some more sandwiches.'

Pike, the horsebreaker, put his hand to his forehead and backed out of the office, but took advantage of Mrs. Curgenven's attention being directed towards the agent to have a good stare at the new squiress.

'A chair—nay, five—all in the office are at your disposal,' said Physic. 'And sherry. What say you, madam? We must build up our constitutions; we mustn't let the clock run down.'

Theresa slightly bowed. She turned to see that Pike had left and had shut the door, and then, coming close to the office desk, and resting her gloved hand on it, she said: 'You are, no doubt, aware for what purpose I am here, Mr. Physic.'

'Stay a bit,' said the agent. He ran to the door and recalled Pike, and when the horsebreaker returned Physic said: 'By the way, I think Mr. Pike may be able to throw some light on a topic we mentioned the other day. Now, my good fellow, lend me your attention for a few minutes. Screw up your memory to concert pitch. Tell me if by great exertion you can recall what happened in October five years ago.'

'Yes, sir. I broke a nice little cob for Sir Sampson Tregontic.'

'I do not mean that. Can you remember whether you did anything for the late Captain Lambert?'

'No, sir, not five years ago; four years ago, come March, I bought him a mare which I thought 'ud a done for his carriage. You see, the second of his pair had a splint——'

'I do not mean that either, Pike. I am referring to your witnessing a document. Did Captain Curgenven ever call you into the house——'

'Into the Bungalow, sir.'

'Yes, into the Bungalow, to see him set his hand to any document?'

'Oh yes, I remember it quite well.'

'And what was the document, Pike?'

'Well, sir, I can't say as I was given it to look at. The squire he said he only wanted me and Roger Morideg to witness his signature to his will ; that was all I knew about it.'

'Exactly. You can write your name, Pike, I suppose?'

'To be sure I can. I'm not a scholar. Never had the chances some young folk has now, but I can write "Samuel Pike"; I can do that.'

'And old Morideg?'

'Oh, he couldn't; he could only put a cross, and that a rare queer one I reckon, so the squire he put to it that it was his token, as how he couldn't write.'

'And you remember this perfectly, Pike?'

'Perfectly. It was just afore St. Matthew's fair at Liskeard.'

'Thank you, that will do, Pike. I will not detain you longer.'

When the horsebreaker had left the office, Pike said with a smile: 'I thought it as well, as Pike happened to be here, to find out what he knew about the signature. When I show you the will in a minute or two you will see that it is as he said. He signed his name as witness, and old Morideg set his cross. Why Captain Lambert had these two men in to see him set his hand to the will is not hard to discover. The document was to be used only on an emergency, only in the event of your reappearing, and therefore in the event of his marriage with Miss Jane Pamphlet proving invalid and vitiating the marriage settlement. He therefore went out of his way to get a couple of ignorant and uninterested persons to act as witnesses. That, I take it, is the meaning of Pike and Morideg having been employed on the occasion. If you have any further doubt—if you think that I am trying to deceive you, go and ask old Roger Morideg. He has no love for me. I consigned him to prison for having knocked me down, and I have turned him out of his house. But he can't deny that he was called in by Captain Curgenven to witness his signature to his last will and testament. Now, madam.'

Physic went to his desk and unlocked a drawer. He drew forth a long envelope, and held it under the eyes of Theresa.

'You remember this, madam? It was what you put into my hands.'

'Yes. That is it,' said Theresa, recognising at once the inscription on the cover.

'Very well,' said Physic. He drew the contents from the envelope, unfolded and spread the paper on the desk.

'Let me see,' mused the agent. 'How shall it be? I'm not going to put this into your hands. It's too valuable to me, and ditto to you. I'll hold it out flat on the desk, and you shall look over my shoulder and read it. Will that satisfy you?'

'You cannot trust me?'

Physic laughed. 'You've been too long in America. You know too much of the seamy side of life. You've been at the grindstone so that a fine edge is put on you. Thank you, madam, I'd rather not.'

He stood at the desk with his hands on the open will, and Theresa looked at it over his shoulder.

'There!' said the solicitor, pointing to the bottom of the third sheet as he turned it over. 'Look! it is as Pike said: there is Morideg's scrambling cross, as crooked and shapeless as some of the granite crosses on the moor. And there stands "Samuel Pike"; and, pray observe, every folio initialed or signed. No mistake about it, none at all. How do you like it?'

'Let me read it,' said Theresa.

A little hope had risen in her heart that there might be in it some mention of herself—not for the sake of a bequest, but as a token of kindly feeling from her first husband. This will was to stand if she reappeared on the scene. She read it through, but her name did not once occur in it; not a penny was left to her by it; not a token appeared that Lambert entertained the smallest atom of regard for her.

She sighed.

'Ah! it makes you uncomfortable,' said Physic with a chuckle. 'You don't relish having to turn out of Curgenven, do you?'

'It was not over that I sighed.'

'Oh! but that is not a cheering prospect. What will you do? "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed," eh? Go on the stage again, and maintain Mr. Percival in cigars and cheap claret on what you earn? And have that pittance sliced into to send Justinian to school. You would prefer his absence to his presence.'

'I do not believe,' said Theresa, 'that Mrs. Jane will thank you for this will. She would prefer to remain as she is rather than have it produced.'

'I shall not ask her. I know that as well—better than you. She is too proud to endure the thought that she was not married respectably, and is not all square in the sight of society. But

that is nothing to me. I prove the will, whether she likes it or not—whether you like it or not. I shall find some explanation for its not having been produced earlier.'

'But if Mrs. Jane Curgenven does not wish it, why should you?'

'Put it as you will. I am an honourable man, and am bound to carry out the instructions of my deceased client. Or put it,' he laughed, 'that I owe you a grudge for having refused me and taken Percival Curgenven. It is the same to me which way you put it.'

'It is of no use, I suppose, my pleading with you?'

'None the least. Words are naught. But, I won't say that I am not amenable to reason, if very solid reason—*solid* reason, understand—be given me why I should put the will back in my desk.'

'Surely these are solid reasons that neither party affected by the will desires its production. I, certainly not, for it sends me and my husband to poverty. But then I am quite sure Jane Curgenven does not desire that this will should be proved; the wound to her pride would be too great.'

'These may be solid reasons to you, but not to me.'

'Then what do you mean?'

'Come, now,' said Physic, 'I'm going to open a mine on a bit of moor I've acquired. It will cost money, and I shall have to sink a lot before there can be any return. Now, look here, madam, I will undertake one thing. Find me three hundred pounds, and for a twelvemonth you shall hear no more of this will. It shall remain in my desk, and not even walk out of its envelope.'

'Three hundred pounds!'

'Three hundred pounds. Unless that be forthcoming within one fortnight, I shall go to the Probate Office with the will.'

'I will speak to my husband.'

'You shall not mention it to him. I tell you he is too careless about consequences to be trusted. The will proved, he will curse his stars he was such a fool as not to propitiate me.'

'But how am I to find three hundred pounds?'

'That is your affair. A woman of the world such as you is full of expedients.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN ENCOUNTER.

It was Sunday: a fair and pleasant day. The Sunday-school scholars in file had been marched to church and ranged on their benches, exhaling around them a combined odour of soap and bergamot.

Farmers, in their glossy black coats and tall hats of antiquated fashion, took their places. The servants from the Rectory and from the Manor arrived as flights of humming-birds, so brilliant was their plumage. The choir were collected about the organ that occupied the north chancel aisle, and at it sat, or 'presided,' as newspapers say, Jane Curgenven in widow's weeds. The organ had stood for several decades under the tower arch at the west end of the nave, where it was in perhaps the best position it could occupy. But there is a fashion in placing organs as there is a fashion in hats, and when the fashion was in full flow to have the organ at the east end of an aisle, where it would be most unsightly, at considerable cost it was removed to that position, and the rector preached on the occasion to assure the parishioners that the changed position of the instrument had no doctrinal signification.

At the urgency of the incumbent, to the irritation and amid the growls of the neighbourhood, on the death of the penultimate squire a memorial reredos had been set up to him in the chancel by public subscription, and now the neighbourhood was in agonies of apprehension lest an appeal should go forth for subscriptions to a memorial window to the late squire. The reredos in question was an elaborate structure of marble and tile, in which were floreated niches designed and executed to contain nothing, and exquisitely sculptured frameworks to enclose blanks. This reredos also, as the Rev. Mr. Pamphlet assured all doubters, had positively no meaning.

Indeed, so scrupulous a man was the Rev. Mr. Pamphlet lest erroneous teaching should be presented to eye or ear of his flock, that he took precautions to teach them nothing at all. He may be said through his pastorate to have dealt with sacrament and ceremony as boys do with eggs. Having blown out all their contents, he bade his parishioners thank Heaven that it was their

glorious, their precious privilege to possess in their beloved church a museum of empty shells.

Mrs. Jane had her eye on the manorial pew that occupied the south chancel aisle. As long as she had been squiress she had not taken her place in it, as duty had called and glued her to the organ-stool, save on saints' days, when there was no choir. As Miss Pamphlet, daughter of the rector, she had drilled the choir, and had played the instrument that accompanied their voices. She did not resign her post, when she became lady of the manor, to schoolmaster, mission-woman, or scripture-reader, for the first could not manipulate an instrument; the mission-woman, on principle, would play Gregorian music only; and the evangelist, also on principle, nothing but Moody and Sankey. Consequently the squiress had maintained her place as teacher of the singers and organist throughout her reign, and had never consciously desired to resign it for the more dignified and dominating position in the squirearchical pew under the monuments of many past Curgenvens and the helmet and tabard of Sir Justin Curgenven, the Crusader, that hung below the wall-plate.

Now, however, that her right to occupy this pew was lost, she hankered after it, and was conscious of a consuming bitterness in her heart at the thought that perhaps the place therein that had been hers, had she cared to take it, for seventeen years would now be invaded by a stranger—and such a stranger! That her place—*her* place, the place of Jane Curgenven of immaculate fame, who had never missed a choir practice, been the mainspring of all the parochial activities—should be taken from her by a mere adventuress! Jane Curgenven inadvertently trod on the pedals, and a note that escaped uttered a whine. The boy at the bellows, thinking this was a signal to him to display his energies, began immediately to labour at his lever, and this was followed by bursts of wind from the overladen bellows. Mrs. Jane looked round the angle of the instrument and shook her head at him, when he at once desisted.

Would the person who had married Percival appear in church that day? This was a question in Jane's mind, and she could not resolve whether it would be better for that person to remain away or to appear. If she did not come to church on this her first Sunday at Curgenven, it would be much the same as a proclamation to the parish that she was not a Christian and Churchwoman, or, what was much the same thing, did not care to sit under the Rev.

Mr. Pamphlet. It would be setting a bad example that was certain to be quoted by total and partial abstainers from divine worship, and it would accordingly be furnishing her, Jane Curgenven, with a grievance that she would be justified in making the very most of. It would be a plausible excuse for letting her imagination riot among the forms of heresy and agnosticism and atheism prevalent in the United States, and to speculate which had upset the faith of this individual—that is, supposing she ever had any to be upset. But then, on the other hand, if she did come to church, was it desirable even for the sake of example? Would it not seriously compromise the Church and her father should some dreadful scandal come out relative to this woman's past, or should her moral or social conduct become scandalous in the future? And, again, what good was divine service likely to do to a person of this sort? It could only harden her, deaden her, perhaps puff her up with the thought that she was an admirable member of society and a devout daughter of the Church. Would it not be a sort of sacrilege for a creature of this character to raise her voice in the hymns and psalms, to say 'Amen' to the prayers, and to have the words of her father poured into her ears?

The bell ceased. At once Jane Curgenven rapped on the keys, and the blower bent his back at the bellows. To the strains of 'How beautiful are the Feet' there sailed in the rector, in very full surplice and very full white whiskers, from the vestry and up the aisle, like a large white owl.

When the voluntary was concluded Mrs. Jane Curgenven turned in her seat to listen with one ear to the exhortation, and with one eye to observe the manorial pew. In it she saw the new Mrs. Curgenven standing, in plain navy-blue dress, with simple bonnet with feather and ribbons to match.

'I should have expected her to have been more of a peacock,' mused Jane. 'This kind of people are loud and dressy; but she is acting a part.'

It was remarkable how appropriate psalm and lesson were that day; how they spoke of certain persons being deceitful upon the weights, and lighter than vanity itself; of wandering stars to whom was reserved the blackness of darkness; all of which were of obvious application—so Jane Curgenven thought. Even the rector's sermon had points in it that seemed levelled against the intruder into the manorial pew, which was the more remarkable because the rector took pains to rub down every point that happened to appear

in his discourses, lest it should have by hazard personal application to any one who might chance to be present. There are men, say the Germans, on the further side of the hills, and it was only at such as were beyond sight, and among whom his arrows might fall spent, that the Rev. Mr. Pamphlet ever drew his bow. After the service had been ambled through with decorum, and the Benediction had been spoken with pathos, Jane played a voluntary for the departure of the congregation. That ended, and the stops driven in, she turned on her stool and saw that Mrs. Percival Curgenven had not left the church with the rest, but had waited to retire after all had dispersed. Jane left her seat at the organ as Theresa stepped out of the pew, and both met in the chancel. Jane gave Theresa one of those looks from head to feet that express so much not of compliment but of insult. Then she sniffed, tossed her chin, and strode down the chancel steps, showing the other her back, and that a back that shrugged the shoulders simultaneously, then the right, and next the left; next, the hand, after the glove had been drawn on, was put behind, lifted the skirt and shook it. As Jane entered and passed through the churchyard, her attention was engrossed by the clouds, their shape, their menace of rain, till she had reached the gate opening into the Rectory grounds, when she went through and swung it behind her sharply. To her surprise she heard the click of the hasp after it had been shut, and, turning round, saw that Theresa had entered the rectorial precincts.

The temerity of this proceeding roused Jane's anger. She could not legally forbid Theresa entering the church, but she could eject her from private grounds.

She stopped in her walk, and confronted the new squires with sternness in her face.

'I beg your pardon: this is not a public walk.'

Theresa halted, and said gently: 'I do not wish to intrude.'

'This is private ground.'

'Then I will retire; but might I have a word?'

'You have probably mistaken the person to whom you wish to address yourself. I am Mrs. Curgenven.'

'It is with you I wish to speak.'

'You do me an honour' (spoken in that tone of voice and with an inflection that implied, 'In that you have the advantage of me').

Jane walked leisurely forward, with hand extended to take hold

of the gate and close it, and with a repellent expression that forced Theresa to retreat.

Jane would not pause till she had made Percival's wife draw through the opening in the hedge and rail, and then, planting her feet on the granite threshold that served as a step into the churchyard, she said: 'I am at your service. But we lunch punctually at one on Sundays, and I expect to hear the bell shortly. Can you say your word in five minutes? I fear I cannot afford you a longer space for it. You are, if I mistake not——'

'One woman appealing to another woman,' said Theresa quickly. 'It is the will of Heaven that we should occupy the same parish, and we shall be, as near neighbours, constrained to see a good deal of each other. I am an entire stranger in this place. I have no friends but my husband. I have, to the best of my knowledge, no relations in the world. You are familiar with the neighbourhood, and are one with the society that is found in it. We both loved the same man—bore the same name—though our lots have been so different. You for many years have occupied that position in which I am now placed—one for which I was not born and to which I never aspired.'

Mrs. Jane raised her eyebrows and pursed up her lips. 'Never aspired!' she repeated.

'No; to which I never aspired,' said Theresa.

'And may I ask to what this preamble leads?'

'I have come as the woman I describe—a stranger, and friendless—to you, at home and amidst friends, to ask whether it is possible that you can receive and help me.'

Jane looked coldly at her. Was this acting, or was it a real appeal?

'I can quite understand,' she said, 'that with such a past as yours you should seek the help of some one to escape into respectable society.'

'I beg your pardon. My past is not one to be ashamed of,' said Theresa with some indignation. 'If you mean my birth, that was my misfortune, not——'

'Oh, I did not allude to your birth; of course you could not help that. I cast no reflection on that.'

'Then what do you mean?'

'There are certain—well, you have been on the stage.'

'Yes, for part of a winter. I was driven to it. I needed read. Would not you have done the same?'

‘I—I would have died first. How dare you suggest such a thing to me?’

‘What was the harm?’

‘Oh, I do not say that the stage itself is harmful; it is the association. Everyone knows——’

‘Everyone does not know,’ said Theresa warmly. ‘How can you, born in a parsonage, reared under the shadow of the church, living a country life, never associating with any save country people and parsonic families—how can you know anything about the stage?’

‘I know this,’ said Mrs. Jane: ‘the exhalation from a swamp may reach one’s nostrils without one having to plunge into it.’

‘You have judged partially and unjustly. Excuse my saying so. But, as I said, I was on the stage but for one short period—half a season—and that only because, in the first place, I must have done something in order to live, and, in the next, I took the place of one who from sickness fell out of her engagement. In the difficulties in which the company was situated I was asked to supply her place, and the fact that she was not fulfilling her engagement preyed on her mind. To satisfy her, I went in her place. Before that, and after that, I never performed. And that person whose place I supplied was my dear present husband’s first wife.’

‘I thought as much!’ exclaimed Jane, with a tone of triumph in her voice.

‘What! that I took her place?’

‘Oh dear no! but that she had been no better than——’

‘She was a lovable, patient person, who was the bread-winner when, for the time, Mr. Percival Curgenven was without work. I knew her and I valued her.’

‘“Birds of a feather,”’ muttered Jane to herself.

‘But that is neither here nor there. You did not know her and her merits. I did. Because I loved and valued her, Percival has taken me. Now to the point. Will you be kind to me? My position is difficult.’

‘Kind I will be,’ said Jane Curgenven haughtily, ‘but you must excuse me if I say that we can never be more than acquaintances, without one atom of sympathy between us. We belong to different worlds of thought and feeling. I could not make a friend of you if I would. It is not merely that affair of the stage, which you try to explain away, that forms an insurmountable barrier. You know very well there was that other matter.’

‘What other?’

‘It is idle to pretend not to understand me. That scandalous, that infamous attempt on my poor dear lost husband!’

‘Scandalous! infamous attempt! He was my husband.’

‘That I never will admit.’

‘But I can produce the most unimpeachable testimony, or rather, I could do so if I cared.’

‘Can and could are different moods.’

‘If I have not done so, it was out of consideration for you. If I do not do so, it is because there is nothing to be gained by it.’

‘Oh, pray do not consider me!’

‘I acted on your father’s request. There was not any advantage to myself to be reaped by establishing my marriage, and it would have brought distress on Mr. Pamphlet, and pain and humiliation on yourself.’

‘You were mighty kind!’

‘And even now I could satisfy you if you wished. I have Lambert’s letters to me.’

Mrs. Jane flared up. ‘For Heaven’s sake! He is dead. What may have been your relations to one another in Malta or Corfu, or wherever it was you caught him, poor inexperienced fellow, in your deadly toils, I do not wish to ask. I *will* not inquire. There are certain poisonous combinations which it is deadly to look into. I do not know what Lambert may have written when young and foolish and without strong principles; what I do know is that after he became my husband he was a God-fearing and a moral and honourable man.’

‘There is one thing more,’ said Theresa, her heart beating with indignation. ‘I have reasons to suppose that he did sign a paper that practically admitted his marriage to me——’

‘I know what you mean,’ interrupted Jane. ‘Physic spoke about it to me. That man is a scoundrel. He is capable of anything. I can quite believe that a will has been forged for the sake of whitewashing Lambert’s temporary connection with yourself. Physic hinted something about this: it was to restore Curgenven to me and my daughter on the condition that we admitted that I—that she—I cannot even speak it. The thing was too infamous. Physic owes me a spite. He has done it out of malice, and perhaps in connivance with other interested parties.’

‘Who could they be? Not I; for if such a will existed and were proved Percival and I would be thrown into poverty again.’

‘Oh, I don’t stoop to inquire who contrived the matter. I do not care to unravel these mysteries.’

‘And do you mean to say that you would refuse reinstatement in Curgenven Manor at such a price?’

‘Most certainly. I will never connive at villainy. There goes the gong: I must to lunch.’

‘Then friendship you cannot give me?’

‘I cannot do the impossible. Between me and you there is a great gulf fixed, and we cannot shake hands across it.’

CHAPTER XXXVI.

INVENI PORTUM.

THERESA remained in the churchyard. Jane Curgenven had closed the gate in her face, and had gone off to her lunch.

She seated herself wearily on a flat tombstone. The clerk had departed and none of the congregation remained around the church. They had all gone to their midday meal. The yard was therefore as solitary as it was likely to be at midnight.

Theresa’s brain was on fire and a load of lead was on her heart. With her lay the decision of a momentous question, whether the will of the late Captain Lambert Curgenven was to be produced or not.

She understood the reason why Physic had objected to her consulting her husband. Percival was a man to decide offhand on any question by its superficial merits. On the surface, unquestionably, this case was simple enough. A will had been made, and therefore ought to be produced. To make away with such a document was felony, involving penal servitude. But what might be criminal by law need not be wrong in morals. There was much below the surface qualifying this question and making it difficult of solution, because complicating it with obligations to the wishes of living persons and with consideration for the memory of the dead.

If that will were to make its appearance, it would act as a bomb of dynamite thrown into Curgenven, carrying disaster and dismay on all sides.

Theresa had no great pity for Jane Curgenven, and no overwhelming regard for her father, but she knew that no blow could

search out and cut to the quick their self-esteem, which was their prevailing if not their only passion, more cruelly than were she by means of this document to expose the real position Jane Pamphlet had held, and to deprive her of every title to be called by any other than her maiden name, and to bastardise her child. How terrible for the mother to have to inform her daughter that they could no longer bear the name that they had worn with such confidence! Not at any price, not certainly at that of reinstatement in Curgenven, would Jane submit to such shame. To be Miss Jane Pamphlet, squires of Curgenven, would be to her worse than to have to fly to a desert island and there hide her dishonour.

Notwithstanding the rudeness, the unkindness Theresa had encountered, she shrank from causing Jane so much distress; she was unable to refuse a certain amount of admiration for the resolution with which this woman shut her ears and blinded her eyes to unpleasant facts, and by denying them thought she deprived them of their right to be facts. But all Jane's resistance and pertinacity in refusing to see what was unpleasant could avail her nothing were the will established. It would be as the mistress, and not as the wife, of the late Captain Lambert that Jane could alone inherit Curgenven, at the same time that she resigned to the woman she looked upon as the dirt under her feet the honourable title of wife which she had so long borne.

Theresa, moreover, pitied the old rector, who had stalked so complacently on his stilts, a head taller morally than everyone else; pitied him when she thought how the truth, if made public, would bear him down. The truth he had been obliged to admit, and for the sake of concealment had been ready to waive all claims of his daughter and granddaughter on the Curgenven estate. But he might admit it to his own heart and remain on his stilts. If it became public he would come down, stilts and all.

Theresa thought also of her husband, of the ease and happiness that seemed to enhalo his later life. In the vigour of youth, in the strength of manhood he had made a botch of life; was it likely that he would be able to earn his living when he had turned the corner of his career? The desultory, erratic habit was inbred. He had not, under stress of necessity, been able to buckle to serious and steady work in the first half of life; was he likely to do so, to reveal energy and show perseverance in the second stage?

She thought of Justinian. The boy had had his education neglected. His father had made him as himself, or had done his

best to do so. A boy of generous disposition and warm heart ; one who was cut out by nature to be a good country squire whose object in life is sport. But he was fit for nothing else. If forced to work for his living, there was every chance of his making as little way as had his father. But then Justinian was young, and not completely formed ; there might be entertained hope for such, and Theresa did not spend much thought on him.

It was otherwise with the memory of the testator. Was she to reveal him to the world in an ugly light ? Was it not her duty as his widow to be careful of his reputation, to save him from becoming the topic of conversation in every house between Liskeard and Launceston ? What sort of comment would be passed on him ? What could men and women say of the man who had so lightly deserted one wife, and without taking proper pains to ascertain whether she were alive or dead, had married another, and that the daughter of the most highly respected clergyman in the district ? What could be said of the man who left the hateful secret to be disclosed after his death, because he was too great a coward to face the consequences of its being known whilst he was alive ?

Theresa had little doubt in her mind that Lambert had committed suicide. No one else thought so save Physic. But were the truth to be known about his relations to her and Jane, everyone would conclude that he had shot himself to escape exposure. He had shot himself. His punishment had fallen on him. Theresa could enter into his mind and weigh the agony of remorse, the doubt, the desperation that tore him, when he ran into the Bungalow, took down the pistol, loaded it, and applied the muzzle to his head. He had suffered the penalty of his acts. Let that suffice. Let his memory remain unsullied by any act of hers. Let her stand between him and the revelation that would blast his name.

And, lastly, she thought of herself.

A qualm came over her. She had striven to obtain her livelihood, and had met with as little success as Percival, who had lounged. She had become overwearied with the incessant strain, never pretermitted for a day, the strain to hold her own, to maintain her proper level, and not to sink exhausted on the ground, lay her head in the dust, and let the heart out of utter weariness cease to perform its function. At length, in ripe years, she had been able to seat herself and look forward to rest.

There was a picture that she knew well, and understood as

perhaps did few others. It is in Doré's 'Wandering Jew.' The unfortunate cobbler was doomed to walk till the Last Day. Century after century passes, and night and day the weary man trudges on. Others may sit down, but not he. Others may lay their heads on pillows and fall into dead sleep, but not he. The shoes wear out and re-form on his blistered feet. His muscles are knotted with cramp from overstrain, but may not be relaxed. His eyes are as lead in their sockets, but may not be closed. Then he hears the blast of the trumpet of the Archangel, and at once he sits down and proceeds to kick off his shoes. This is what the artist represents. He has seen into the heart of the utterly fagged-out man. His first, nay, his only thought, at the peal of the trumpet is to sit and be rid of his boots. And Theresa had been on the trudge for nineteen years, and was wearied to the death of it. She had found at length a seat and rest, but only for a moment; the harsh voice of Physic had bidden her tramp on. But not for ever; surely there remained but one struggle more, one on which she had never reckoned, and after that she would have nothing more to fear.

She must find three hundred pounds at once; and she had nothing of her own. In his wonted careless manner Percival had made no settlement on her at his marriage, he had neither promised her anything of her own whilst under coverture, nor assured her anything after his death. He had put his hand into his pocket, or had drawn a cheque when she had desired to buy anything; but that very morning in church Theresa had felt the awkwardness of having no purse and allowance of her own, for there had been a collection in behalf of some charity, and she had had no money to put into the plate.

She would have to obtain the three hundred pounds from Percival without being able to tell him for what she required the sum. She shrank from asking this; she was uncertain how he would take it; she feared lest it should occasion a difference, lest he should refuse her the money, or lest he should give it with reluctance and suspicion. It was a large sum to require without her being able to explain her need for it.

As she mused, her finger unconsciously traced the letters engraved in the slate of the tombstone on which she was seated. She now looked at the inscription. It ran:

Inveni portum; spes et fortuna valet,
Nil mihi vobiscum: ludite nunc alios.

She was a sufficient scholar to make out the sense. What! was the grave the only harbour of refuge for the storm-tossed? Were hope and fortune making their sport of her for a brief period, then to desert her?

She put her hand to her brow, that was throbbing as if it would burst. Then Percival, who had approached unobserved, unheard, over the turf of the churchyard, said: 'My dear, why have you not come to lunch? By Jove! it is new to me to say "lunch." I have been accustomed to dine at one o'clock, and have cold something and cheese in the evening for supper. Bathsheba's supreme effort was always for the midday meal.'

'I did not consider I should be wanted,' said Theresa.

'My dear, you are always in request when not present—not by me only. Justinian has been calling out for you. Are you not very well?'

'No, Percy, not that, but worried.'

'Gracious! what have you to worry you?'

'The usual worry. What troubled you in old days.'

'I was always short of money,' answered Percival readily. 'But that can't fret you now.'

'It does; I have nothing. There was a collection in the church this morning, and I had not a penny in my pocket'

'Why did you not ask me before?'

'I did not know there would be a collection.'

'It doesn't matter. I'll send five bob to the old pomposity. What was it for?'

'I—I really do not recollect.'

'It does not matter. I'll send the five bob.'

'Yes, Percy, but that does not satisfy me. It is very awkward for me to be without cash.'

'What do you want, T.?'

Percival Curgenven put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a handful of copper and silver.

'I say, I have no gold here. But I can make up a sovereign in silver. And that will be all the better, T., because then you will have plenty of small change.'

'Thank you, Percival, but that does not exactly meet my requirements.' She rose from the tomb and laid her hand on his arm. 'I want more than that. It seems mean of me to ask it. I owe you everything, dear; you have been so good to me.'

Oh, stuff! it is I who am laid under obligation.'

‘Well, there are circumstances that oblige me to ask you to make me an allowance. May I ask you to give me a certain sum, to deal with just as I like, to spend or to hoard as suits my fancy; to go to when I want something very much, without having to come with the bill to you?’

‘Certainly. But don’t bother about that now.’

‘Yes, Percy, I must. You see I may need money at any moment. To-morrow is Monday. Might I have my allowance to-morrow in a cheque?’

‘Certainly you shall. Come along to feed. There is some very nice lobster salad, uncommonly well made. Our new cook is a first-rater.’

‘Then I may have the cheque to-morrow?’

‘Yes, T., for how much? I dare say I could get you some gold by scraping about, if you want ready money.’

‘I should like——’ Then her heart failed her, and with her heart her powers. She sank back on the tombstone. The sum was so great. She was sick at heart.

‘My dear husband,’ she said in a timid voice, ‘do you recall what I said when you proposed to me? I said then that it was possible, situated as I was, that certain persons might turn up and assert claims on me——’

‘What, some relations have manifested themselves? Where are they? Ask them to lunch. Leave all that to me.’

‘I cannot, Percy. I warned you then, but I did not then think it could happen, but what I feared has come about, though in a most unforeseen manner. I must have three hundred pounds to satisfy someone who otherwise could cause both of us great annoyance.’

‘He has begun at once, upon my word he has! But don’t let these fellows bother you. Pass them on to me. I’ll satisfy them with my walking-stick.’

‘No, no, Percy. This is a real claim. I cannot explain its nature to you. I cannot tell you any particulars about the person who makes the demand. All I can say is that, unless I find the money, I shall be put to great unhappiness that may be permanent.’

‘You shall have the money; but it is a large sum.’

‘And then you will not inquire what becomes of it.’

Percival was evidently uneasy.

‘Is this the first and last demand?’

‘It is the first; I hope, I do hope it will go no further.’

‘I’ll make it four hundred,’ said her husband ; ‘at any rate for this year ; then there is a hundred for yourself over. But, T., don’t let this be tried on again, or I shall have to interfere. There is no satisfying bloodsuckers. Is it someone who pretends cousinship?’

‘I said I could tell you nothing.’

‘All serene. I won’t ask. But, I say, T., I hope the lobster salad will be as good when we get to it as it was when I started after you.’

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CIVILISATION AND SAVAGERY.

AFTER this scene in the churchyard, Theresa was aware of a slight diminution in cordiality in her husband. He was probably unconscious of it himself, but the freshness, the frankness of confidence between him and his wife were gone. He endeavoured to be cheery and amiable as usual, but there was evident to her eye an effort on his part to seem as he had been. A jar in the perfect harmony that had reigned between them had taken place, a drop of bitterness had fallen into the cup out of which both drank. A little germ of suspicion had entered into his heart, there to ferment. A tendency to decline was noticeable in the barometer that marked even weather. Theresa was alive to this, and unhappy. A fire burnt in her heart, a fire of resentment against Physic, who was the occasion. He had come to mar her happiness, which had otherwise been complete. She might have been content, had she felt confident that the three hundred pounds she had obtained for him were sure to suffice, and that he would no further press for money ; but her fear was that this was but the beginning of a series of exactions, and that the result would be estrangement between her husband and herself. Percival would reasonably ask for whom and for what purpose these demands were made, and if she refused to tell him, and refuse she must, he would be filled with vague and disquieting suspicions that would destroy confidence between them, and seriously jeopardise the continuance of his affection.

And the man who was bringing this blight on her life was Physic. Her bosom heaved, her heart swelled. She clenched her hands. She hated him. She had been walking through the grounds,

now she opened the wicket-gate and went out on the moor, and was suddenly aware of a girl who was dodging among the trees and behind the hedges.

Theresa halted in her walk and watched the girl, who, when she saw she was observed, came from her hiding and sauntered along the down, then stopped and turned to see whether Theresa were still looking at her. When she was aware that she continued to engage attention, she turned abruptly and came towards her.

Theresa was struck by the easy grace of the girl, by the elasticity of her tread, the flexibility of her upright body, and the beauty of her flowing red-gold hair. There was a sullen, peevish expression in her handsome face. She stepped up to Theresa and said: 'Why do you look at me? What do you want? Are you his new mother?'

Theresa smiled: 'I think I have heard of you. My husband, Mr. Curgenven, has mentioned your name. You are Esther Morideg.'

'Yes, I am. Is there any hurt in that?'

'None at all. I was very sorry to hear that you had been turned out of your cottage by Mr. Physic. Have you found a new home?'

'No. We are in a linney, a bit.'

'I will come and see you some day, and perhaps I may be able to take your grandmother something that will help to make her comfortable.'

'Oh, gran'fer and gran'mother don't want nothing but to be let alone. Us was well enough till Physic came and turned us out. I say, be you the squire's new wife?'

'Yes, I am Mrs. Curgenven.'

'I say, where is the young squire? Why ha'n't he been nigh us? I want to see'n, I do, cruel bad.'

'What for? Is there anything I can do for you?'

'You? No.'

'Then why do you want him?'

The girl looked irresolutely at her, then dropped her eyes. She caught her skirt and played with it, plucking with both hands and shuffling with her feet in the short grass.

'I do want to see'n, I do.'

'For what reason?'

The girl stamped impatiently. 'I ain't got no reasons. I ha'n't see'n for four days—there—wi'nt that do? I reckon he's been to the pass'nage, he has; he've been wi' Miss Alice, sure

enough.' She raised her head, her cheeks were on fire. 'Well, I reckon and so he ort, but for all I want to see'n cruel bad, I do; so there now!'

'Esther,' said Theresa, 'would you like to come with me and see Curgenven house and gardens? I will show them to you.'

'Yes, I would. That other, the ou'd squiress, her turned me out; her wouldn't let me have tea wi' the childer, nor see nort. Her were a hard 'un.'

'Then come with me, Esther; I will show you everything.'

'Is he at home?'

'If you mean Mr. Justinian,' said Theresa, becoming more grave, 'he is not.'

The girl hesitated, but finally resolved to accept the offer. 'Come along then,' she said, with a swing of her body in the direction of the house.

The thoughts of Theresa were for awhile diverted from her own troubles. This wild moor-girl interested her. She also was a victim to Physic's unscrupulousness. As these two walked side by side, Theresa knew that she was herself menaced by that man with the like treatment that had been administered to Esther. One had been driven out of her home, the other was threatened with expulsion. The thought of this drew Theresa to her strange associate. But another consideration urged her to make Esther's acquaintance. Percival had told her how he had come upon Justinian with the girl at the cross on the moor-edge, and of his own uneasiness on that head.

Theresa and Esther were both waifs out of the evenly flowing stream of common social life. Neither had much to boast of in parentage. Both suffered from not belonging to the great bulk of settled humanity that knows all about itself and its belongings on all sides, that has grown on one spot, and has come to share the opinions and prejudices and likings of surrounding humanity, as insects and birds take the colours of the foliage in the midst of which they dwell. Esther in her own sphere was as much shunned and despised as Theresa knew she would be in the sphere into which she had been taken up. She felt a pity for the girl, and kindly interest in her, and Theresa looked at Esther's face with curiosity as she walked at her side.

It was a handsome face, with boldly cut features, a broad forehead, with fine hazel eyes under the arched brows; the mouth was singularly delicate, and the chin fine for one in her class of life.

The face was one of generous impulse ; of strength and weakness in equal combination, of defiance and fear, of rudeness and refinement.

'I say,' the girl turned on Theresa, 'do'y like him now?'

'Whom? Mr. Justinian? Indeed I do. I like him very much.'

'There now,' said Esther, with light flashing in her face, 'I be main glad o' that. You don't seem such a bad 'un. I reckon he were a little out about his father marrying you. But I told'n he couldn't ha' everything he liked. I reckon he likes you now he's come to know you?'

'Yes, I think so.'

'There, I be glad o' that.' She took Theresa's hand in hers and patted it with the other. 'He and Miss Alice be my best friends; and I reckon, if you behave yourself, you shall be another. I likes your face, I do.'

'Thank you, Esther,' said Theresa with a smile. 'Here we are at the house. Come in.'

'No; there now, I be 'most ashamed.' The girl hung back. 'It be so terrible fine.'

'There is no one to alarm you. You and I can go through the rooms together. We shall find no one there; Mr. Curgenven and Master Justinian have gone out shooting together.'

The girl looked at the house with mistrust. She wished to see the interior, and yet was shy of entering. She was conscious of the incongruity of her own appearance in rough homespun with the refinement and beauty of the interior.

When she entered the hall she kicked off her shoes, afraid to walk in them on the polished oak floor. She put her hands behind her back, and looked at the walls hung with family portraits, and at the flowers on a stand in the middle.

'Who be all they?' she asked, with her eyes on the pictures.

'Those are Curgenvens for two hundred years and more, fathers and grandfathers, back and back, when the dress was very different from what it is now.'

'I never knowed who my father was,' said Esther.

'Nor do I who was mine,' said Theresa.

'Now, you don't say so!' The girl drew to the side of Mrs. Curgenven.

Theresa led Esther into the dining-room, where the table was spread with white linen, and glittered with glass and silver. The girl looked steadily at the table for a while, then went to it and

took up a dessert spoon. 'I reckon this be silver,' she said. 'Why, what a lot of shillings be in her!'

'Yes; I dare say ten or twelve.'

'What do you have 'em about for? B'ant y' afeard folks 'll steal 'em?'

'Oh no, not here.'

'I would hide 'em up the chimley, under the drexil. Don't y' now let on'd Physic see 'em, or he'd never let y' be easy till he'd gotten them all. He's as great a thief, for certain sure, as any o' them chaps as be shut up in Bodmin gaol.'

'Would you like anything to eat, Esther? I can order you something directly.'

'No, thank y', I couldn't eat here, I'd not know how to do it wi' all these grand things about. I couldn't tell what I had i' my mouth when my eyes was so full of strange sights.'

'Then come with me and you shall see the drawing-room.'

'And what be that for? Sure you've more rooms than you can want. Why should you not sit and talk and do what you've a mind to do here after you've done eatin'? I can't see why you mun ha' a different chamber for everything you do—one to read in, one to talk in, one to eat in, and one to play in. I grant y' it's reasonable to have one to sleep in as is not the same. But all the rest is waste and nonsense. Ay! and you must have a house for smoking 'baccy in too—the Bungalow. 'Tis foolishness. I'm glad I'm not Jan Jeaks' (snail) 'to hev to carry such a house as this on my back. I don't know as it's much to make one happy to have a house. I've not got one; some Physic may come and turn you out. If you've none, why you're free as the air, and nobody can't take nothing from you, like the horniwinks' (plovers).

'How would you like to live in such a house as this?'

'I could not live in it; I should die. It's all very well to look at now and again, but to live in—bless you, I couldn't do it!'

Theresa took the girl into other parts of the house, and then said to her: 'Now, what more would you like?'

'Look'y here now!' said Esther, and drew open her throat, displaying her coral necklace. 'Have you aught like that?'

'I will show you my jewelry—yet not mine—the family jewels. When I am dead they will go to the wife of Justinian.'

She led the girl up the stately Queen Anne staircase, with full-length portraits on it of Curgenvens in powder and wigs, in blue velvet and crimson velvet, of the ladies of the house with

their hair low over their eyes, in shot satins, with pearls about their long necks, and dogs at their sides.

'These,' said Theresa, turning on a landing, 'these are the wives of the Curgenvens, grand and beautiful ladies who never let the sun look on their faces unveiled.'

She conducted Esther to her bedroom, opened a cabinet and produced a jewel-case, unlocked it, and let the evening sun glitter on the diamonds.

The girl took up a necklet and in speechless admiration let it twinkle about her fingers. Then she was shown another of sapphires; rings and bracelets, and brooches and tiaras. Theresa removed her hat and put on some of the jewelry, that the girl might understand how it was worn.

Then suddenly Esther put her hand to her own coral necklace and tore the string so that the coral grains fell about the floor. 'It's just naught at all,' she said.

Theresa knelt and began to collect the strewn members of the necklace. 'You are wrong—altogether wrong,' said she. 'Esther, this coral looks charming on your pretty neck; it suits you admirably. But these diamonds and pearls would make you ridiculous. You could not wear them.'

'No; I'd be a dressed-up monkey,' said the girl.

'These will go to Justinian's wife, and will suit beautifully her delicate skin and her refined beauty.' As Theresa spoke, she felt over the floor for more pieces of coral. 'She will be a lady like those you saw on the stairs. Some of these jewels were worn by them, and suited them, as you could see in the paintings. Justinian's wife will be painted some day in the same style, and hung with the others. I dare say she will be quite as noble and lovely a lady as any of them. She will be very happy in this grand house, and will know exactly what to do in it—in each of the rooms; know all as a matter of course, because she was bred to it. And she will play the piano and make sweet music——'

'Why are you saying all this?' asked Esther uneasily.

'Esther, my dear,' continued Theresa, without noticing her interruption, 'it would be dreadful to Justinian to lose all this, to be poor, to have to live in a linney, to eat without silver forks, and lie in fern and heather, and not have servants to wait on him. It would be as strange to him, such a life as yours, as it would be strange to you to live such a life as his.'

'I reckon it would.'

The girl was turning a pearl necklace about her brown bare arm.

‘See!’ she said; ‘don’t this look comical?’

‘It does. But are you attending to what I say?’

Esther laid the string of pearls aside in the case. ‘There,’ she said, ‘lock it all up again. I’ve seen enough of them. I don’t want to see them no more.’

‘I will do so, and put them aside for Justinian’s wife, as I am not likely to wear them. I was not born to such a place as this, and so I cannot wear them. Now, Esther, tell me the truth. Why were you hiding among the trees when I came through the park? For whom were you looking? On whom waiting?’

The girl hung her head and turned it aside.

‘You need not answer me,’ said Theresa; ‘I know. You were hoping to meet Justinian.’

‘If I were, there’s no harm in that;’ with a toss of the hair and a slight tone of defiance.

‘It will not do, dear Esther; indeed it will not. You never can properly be Justinian’s companion. How can you, when he lives in such a house as this, and you, as you say, in an old stable?’

The girl put up her arms and dropped her face between them.

‘It is this that I wished to say to you,’ pursued Theresa, ‘that you two can be friends only at a distance. You see now that it is not possible for you to be his wife. You never could shape yourself to live in this place. On the other hand, you could not drag him away to your wretched hovel. He would be infinitely miserable there. And, Esther, you can be a friend to the young squire only at a long distance. Do you understand? I speak seriously. There is one thing to a woman above everything precious—her honour. Treasure that, dear child. Never risk that. Lose that, and though the noblest in the land you are vile as dirt. Preserve it, and you stand as high as a princess. I am anxious for you, I am anxious for him. He is generous; he is careless. You are generous and inconsiderate——’

The girl threw herself passionately on the floor as she would have done on her native heath, and still burying her face in her arms, and turning it to the carpet, sobbed: ‘I love him, I do; I love him!’

(To be continued.)

NATURE STUDIES.

BY A SON OF THE MARSHES.

As a child I had two great desires, and I do not remember indulging particularly in any other: one was that when I grew up I might paint pictures of the wild things that surrounded my lonely home, the other that I might have money enough to buy books about them. I am thankful to say that both these longings have been in a great measure gratified. In my wildest day-dreams, however, I never aspired to writing myself about the creatures. That has come about since my hair turned grey and my hot blood has cooled down a little. I am sure of one thing, that a man who lives amongst the so-called working-classes, and who has also unrestricted intercourse with foresters and the more intelligent rustics, has opportunities for gaining a real insight into wild life such as many a student of nature, who may have been what is from the world's point of view more fortunate in the circumstances of his life, cannot have.

Said one to me lately, 'I have read your books. But do you really see all those things when you walk about?'

'Not in the streets of Dorking town,' I replied.

'Because really, my dear sir, do you know that in all the time that I have been in this neighbourhood I have never seen a tithe of what you have written about.'

The old story of 'Eyes and No Eyes,' I said to myself; also that if some folks had eyes at the back of their heads, as well as in front, they might wander far and see little.

Another man observed that, although he had ridden in a cart for many years in all directions along our high roads, he had never come across any of the creatures I had written about. As the vehicle he used made nearly as much noise in its progress as a goods train might do, it was hardly to be expected that he would.

Readers can easily see that my range is not a wide one, it is only the common objects of the hills, dales, and waters of a limited area that I describe; yet some pains have been necessary even to do that, and in the pursuit of the rail family alone I have often supped with sorrow; while to verify a fact or

two has cost me week after week of hard tramping, many a time. In this way the naturalist fits himself for writing just a small portion of a bird's life. Sometimes the long twenty or thirty miles' walk has been to no purpose, and after giving up the pursuit as a bad job, I have turned my face homewards, and then found the very bird I had gone so far in search of within a twenty minutes' walk of my own door. By patient watchings and waitings, on the part of many different naturalists, fact has been added to fact, until the whole life of a creature furred or feathered has been placed before the public, in order that those whose labours confine them to crowded centres of industry, but who have strong sympathy with life in the open, and the creatures who are able to enjoy it, may understand what are the real lives of the animals and birds.

It is a difficult matter to please some of these would-be students, however, and a short time ago an amusing scene was reported to me. A gentleman, who had read a certain article which had been written by myself, came many miles to see a woodland river and an old weir, the haunt of the otter, which I had there described. When he arrived, however, a band of workmen had unfortunately just finished building a new weir, and they had also cut down all the alders, willows, sedges, and other growth along the river-side, leaving just the stems. This is done every five or six years, as the case may need. Unfortunately he arrived at the place just as the two jobs had been completed. Hither and thither he rushed, until someone asked him if he had lost anything, or if he were looking for someone. Then he gave full vent to his injured feelings; he said, in fact, that he had been swindled—that the writer had drawn very largely on a very fertile imagination. This was perfectly unintelligible to men who knew nothing about such a book having been written. One looked at the other and then touched his forehead, muttering 'Balmy.' This the gentleman heard and naturally resented.

'I have been grossly imposed upon; some people's geese are swans. Where is the old weir?' he asked.

'Just been pulled down and a new un built. Don't ye see it?'

'Why has it been pulled down?'

'Well, if you ask us, they pulled the old un down to build the new un. Any fool can see that.'

'But what a complete swindle—there are no trees here!'

'Maybe you wants to buy the timber and the faggots. If ye do, ye needn't put yerself in a tantrum; none of it aint sold yet.'

Unheeding this, the gentleman went on complaining bitterly; as to owls, he didn't believe there was one of them about the place; and talk about the yikeing laugh of the yaffle, it was sheer humbug.

'What's that you say—no yaffles?' replied one of the men, much amused; 'they're nearly as common as blackbirds in this 'ere park; and owls too, if it didn't happen to be just mid-day. If you was to see them yaffles, and to ask them to holler, I dessay as they'd do it for ye. But do ye know as you're trespassing on this 'ere land?'

'I have come to see some otters.'

'Then you've come on a fool's errand. Did ye think they run about here like sheep. I can git ye one for a suvrin. Ye don't want one? Then you walk off here; for I tell ye, ye are trespassing.'

It was certainly very disappointing for our friend, but rather hard lines that I should be held responsible for his disappointment.

I have received many most kind and sympathetic letters from ardent lovers of the birds, ladies as well as gentlemen, asking me if I would give them the exact localities where I have seen such and such migrants drop in their flight; or where such and such a sequestered pool happens to be situated. Some of these I would fain answer; but I make it a rule not to betray the whereabouts of any of the wild creatures whose secrets I have surprised.

As I said before, it is really hard work watching any members of the rail family; for the cunning of these birds exceeds all belief, and the places they frequent are nothing but quakes. Early in the morning and late in the evening are the times for getting a glimpse of them—that is, if you are lucky in this, for they move about more like rats than birds. Then the midges rise in clouds and sting you most horribly, swamp lands being the abiding places of these insect pests. They form a portion of the daily food of the rails in their nesting time.

And perhaps when you have even offered a rustic, on whose plot of land you want to trespass when in quest of your bird, a sum of money for a small grey and brown bird that you have seen, if they will snare it for you or allow you to snare it—some of their garden plots are only separated from the swamps by a turf

wall—they wonder, and some little diplomacy is necessary ; for they are very tenacious about right of way, and will resent any attempt at trespass, even fiercely.

Many have been my failures compared to my successes in hunting after wild things. Let me describe the haunt of that spotted crake, or, as it is usually called, spotted rail, which after all did *not* come into my hands. A water rail is a bad enough bird to look up ; a spotted rail or crake is worse. Both can run, climb, swim, dive to perfection. Even in thick tangle their movements are as cautious as when they, with coots and moor-hens, visit the gardens on the edge of the swamp from which these have been reclaimed. This they will do in order to pick the hearts out of the ground crops that have just been planted. How they find them out we do not know ; and the mischief is done late in the evening and at night. I have seen them at it many a time, and when the pools or ponds are close to cottages situated on estates this has to be put up with. No shot may be fired, or noose set, where the gentleman in the velveteen suit walks round. I do not intend to enter into this matter ; not being my business, I leave it.

A tramp through meadows, with the Mole twisting in the most erratic manner for three miles, brings us to a clear pool of considerable extent, fringed on one side with dense aquatic tangle. Haying time is over, so we go right up to the bank of tangle from the meadows through which the river snakes. As sedges, bull-rushes, stunted willows, meadow-sweet, alders and loose strife do not enter into the composition of hay, the mowers have simply cut as far as the tangle, leaving that as it was. I know what I am about to suffer before I enter it ; for I have left off smoking, and the day is what the people in and about the fields call a dead-hot day. Not a breath of air is stirring and the 'stouts' bite most ferociously. At this time birds and fish revel in insect food ; it drops down on the water or skims over the surface, and the fish lazily gulp it down ; in fact they are gorged with it.

I have entered the tangle at the thinnest part, for I wish once more to confirm something that I have stated elsewhere, namely, the pike watching for young water birds. If I could see that every day I should not tire of watching it, for the birds know of their danger, and guard against it as well as they can. Not many yards I have crept along, parting the tangle gently to right and left, without making a rustle, getting the backs of my hands covered with midges, whose bites I bear somehow ; then I drop

down and crawl to the edge, looking through a rush tuft which I part for the purpose; and not a yard from me I see a pike—not a large one, for no large fish are here, they do not thrive in this pure spring water. From two to three pounds weight will do, but nothing over that; they are hungry, however, as wolves. There he lies, motionless, just behind some withy roots that run down into the water. Presently there is a ripple on the other side, then another; the fish's fins begin to quiver, but his tail does not move. That quiver of the fins draws him nearer. But there is only a water vole with a bit of sedge in his mouth swimming along, and not the least notice does the fish take of him. Although at other times voles would come to grief, they are safe when young water birds are about.

If I thought fit to go on looking for pike, I should find one watching every few yards. One side of the pool is bordered by open meadows without any tangle. At this season, although very numerous in the water, the pike do not frequent the open; they will come back on that side presently, when no more birds are to be had. From a small puddle some bird rushes, and then flutters broken winged. I know what it means—the bird has young. It is all a sham, but a first-class sham it is; another step, and away go a clutch of young moor-hens, like a lot of black mice on stilts. Willow wrens chide me—I could almost touch some of them—but I press quietly on, smothered by dead tangle and midges, though it will be impossible for me to put up with much more of it. Was that a rat that glided through the bunch of king-cups? No, it shows for one moment, flirting up its tail; it is a spotted crake, the very bird I had tried in vain to get.

Cold spring water was freely used to my face and hands for some time after leaving that pool-side tangle. Birds do not very often come to those who are looking for them; you have to go to them, if you can get there.

It is winter, hard, bitter winter; the snow covers the shingle on the beach above high water-mark; the sky is lead colour, and the water looks like ink, broken at times by the spiteful spit of the crests of the waves, that can barely lift, because the wind is blowing down on them, right on shore. When the waves break, they run up with a hissing noise that tells plainly what is coming.

They rush like huge snakes up to the snow-line on the beach, sending blinding salt spray in all directions; and rush back again,

the stones rattling on the beach as though an express were at full speed there. It is a gale already ; it will be bad presently ; these signs are only preliminary ones, for the waters from the North Sea will come roaring in, a little later, up to the sand downs. A dreary look-out there is—a long stretch as far as the eye can reach of snow—dark sky and darker water. In the foreground are a few blocks of rock, about the height of a man, and behind one of these a fowler is crouching. That great mass of white, about a mile out, is where the wild rush of waters is breaking up in foam on the sand bar. You can hear the howl of it ; not a goose, duck, diver, or wader will be able to rest there, before this gale is over.

Fowls know what is coming ; it is from them, of course, that coast people gain their knowledge, in a great measure, about atmospheric changes. At one time, well within my recollection, the fowls' movements were the only signs they had to go by. Bad as the weather is, fowls are now eagerly feeding on the very edge of the tide—curlews these are. Something moves a whole mob of them, and they rush up shrieking as curlews only can shriek—just over the edge of that hissing surf. Ears and eyes are on the alert ; and as they pass that rock the fowler fires, and eight birds drop in the water. Without one moment's hesitation the gun is dropped in the snow, and he dashes in up to his middle in water ; five he gathers and brings on shore, then he thinks he will strip and swim for the others ; but luckily he is restrained, and the other three birds drift off. I have done foolish things like this in my time, but this was done by a brother naturalist, who has just left us. I admired his pluck, but, being twice his age, I at the same time pointed out that the thing might be done once too often.

In search of birds that frequent salt water and the shores, I have never failed to find some of the various species ; quite sufficient indeed to satisfy me. The plan of proceeding is a very simple one ; certain birds at various seasons—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—frequent particular localities. By knowing these, and going direct to the places, you will find your bird or birds, and no valuable time will be lost in searching. Fashionable watering-places, however, had better have a wide berth given them.

The attitudes that some large birds place themselves in would protect them in comparatively open places. Unless one had seen it, one would hardly give the raptore credit for this ; but they practise it to perfection. This class of birds has been my favourite

study from boyhood, and I shall never be able to finish the study, for something fresh is continually coming before me.

The eagle, for one, places himself in strange positions, a mere bundled up bunch of feathers to look at. A friend of mine who recently visited Achill Island, the island of the eagle, was on the cliffs with his wife and some other friends when the lady saw in a cleft of the rocks close to her what she thought was a splendid tuft of feathers that had been blown there by the wind. On stooping to pick them up, out from the cleft dashed a magnificent eagle, leaving behind him a tuft of feathers as a memento.

Vigilant as the bird is, he is frequently walked over. After gorging he gets drowsy; indeed, it is only under these circumstances that such a thing could take place.

Falcons, hawks—the larger species—can compress their feathers and look very slim, if they think it necessary to do so. As to the owls, they can hump up into any position they think most suitable. It is useless to look for these self-preserving traits in any of the family kept in zoological collections, for the birds are so accustomed to see large numbers of people passing and re-passing, or standing in front of them, that they treat the whole matter with perfect indifference. They know that at a certain time their food will be brought them, and that they are otherwise perfectly safe. Then the raptorial birds in a wild state have a bloom on their plumage, like the bloom on a bunch of grapes, which is not often seen when in captivity.

There is a sameness to be seen in the habits and haunts of all shore birds, no matter where they may be. All shore-shooters know this and compare notes about it. Flats of soft ooze are the same in one locality as another, and beach is beach. As to the sand dunes, or sand hills, they are all alike in general features, go where you will; the only difference is that some are of very great extent, and some comparatively speaking small. One instance out of many that I have witnessed will prove how completely a bird's plumage may mimic the surroundings that it lives and nests in.

We are standing between broken hills of the sand dunes; great humps there are, that will topple over during some high tide, for the swirl of the waters has washed the worn bases of several nearly through. In between, large patches of purple-grey shingles have been washed. I have called them purple-grey, as this is the general tone of them; but broken shells, white pebbles, and the thousand

and one atoms of flotsam and jetsam that litter the foreshore make a glitter that is very deceptive, if you wish to pick matters out in detail.

Tufts of marum, or bents, for this creeping, wiry, grass-like growth is called by either name, hold on where there is the least chance; if I were asked to give this a name, I should call it sea couch—for it will couch and hold on anywhere. A most valuable ally it is where it is found; it binds the sand dunes by its network of creeping roots. This, with sea holly, sea thistles, sand convulvi, and a few tufts of blite, is all the vegetation that grows here.

Pools of water left in some hollows by the last storm glitter in the sun; so clear is this very salt water that a pin could be seen at the bottom of the deepest pool. If you turn your eyes inland there are the rabbit links, and as we are in the hollows that is all we can see in one direction. Looking seawards we see a vast flat of sand, for the tide is out. A solitary gull flaps overhead, the only form of life that shows itself. It has a beauty, although a weird one, this great sand-flat with the dunes as a border to it; but I should not care to spend a day here alone. Others have visited the place and made the same remark, for the strange shapes into which the water had formed the sand hills, some of them fallen, and others ready to fall, used to give me the impression that a small part of our island had been utterly wrecked.

The ringed dotterels nest here; as we tramp over the shingle two rise right in front of us and settle on a sandy knoll near; we can just make them out, and that is all. Then they pitch on some beach a few yards away, and we do not see them again; all our creeping, hiding, and waiting will not benefit us one bit. Still we do not like to be beaten if we can help it, and we try again, but all to no purpose; then just as we are leaving the birds flit up on one side of us, and we are baffled.

If anyone of our readers will visit the New Natural History Museum at South Kensington, in the fine room filled with splendid cases of British birds he will find a case of dotterels and their young on some beach shingle. They are perfect in their setting up, even in the most minute details. When looking at these he will see at the first glance what I have endeavoured to explain here; and that is why dotterels and their young are invisible on shingle.

MARY.

THE room was almost in darkness, for the flickering fire in the small grate only threw a fitful light on the narrow bed with its silent occupant and the bare walls, and the round table covered with a ragged cloth; yet it did not need the sunshine to show the poverty which characterised the apartment.

There was no sound except the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece.

Presently, however, there came a quick knock at the door, and without waiting for an answer a girl pushed it open and entered.

The woman in the bed stirred, and said feebly: 'Is that you, my dear?'

'Yes, Mrs. Dowie,' said the new comer; 'it's me.'

Her voice was young and sweet and clear, but a quicker ear than that of the old woman would have detected its excessive weariness.

'You're all in the dark, I see.'

'Yes,' said the old woman, raising herself slowly on her elbow, and groaning as she did so. 'I'm in the dark. It ain't much use me burnin' candles, my dear. I can't read, nor nothing. Oh, my bones, my bones! Oh, I do ache!'

'Are you worse to-day, Mrs. Dowie?'

'About the same, my dear; not worse, not better. I shan't be much better till the cold weather set in, and then I trust I shall go Home. It won't be very long, I'm hoping. I'm useless enough. I'm very anxious to be gone, very anxious.'

'You're not useless, Mrs. Dowie,' said the girl gently, though in the same tired voice. 'You're a comfort to me. I like to come and see you. You're the one person I trust and believe in.'

'Ah, my dear, you're too young to talk that way,' said Mrs. Dowie. 'Oh, my poor back!' She groaned. 'I can't rest noways,' she went on. 'If I lie I aches, and if I set I aches. All the night I'm awake what with the cough and the pain.'

'And don't you get any rest in the day, Mrs. Dowie?'

The old woman shook her head,

'No,' she said, 'it's the bones, you see. I've the same bones by day as by night. Oh dear, dear, dear! You'll forgive me complainin'.'

'Poor thing, you have reason to,' said the girl sympathetically.

'P'r'aps you'll read to me a bit?'

'Yes; I'll light the candle, shall I?'

'If you please, my dear.'

The girl, who had been standing by the bedside, moved to the fire, then she lit a piece of paper and held it to the tallow candle in the broken candlestick. From her pocket she took a little prayer-book, and began to read aloud the psalms for the day.

The light of the candle fell on her face and on that of the old woman, and threw grotesque shadows on the distempered wall. The two women were in strange contrast to one another. Age and illness and excessive thinness had made Mrs. Dowie hideous. She had lost her teeth, and her mouth had fallen in; she had a high nose and a very protruding chin, and both were sharpened almost terribly; her eyes were sunken and hollow, and her scant grey hair strayed from beneath the crochet nightcap which she wore. Her thin hands with long uncut nails lay out on the counterpane. She was propped up by a pillow and a shawl, and over her nightgown was thrown an old moth-eaten fur cloak.

The girl who was reading to her was sufficiently far removed from a lady to be called ladylike. She was neatly dressed in black and wore a large straw hat with red berries on it. She had pale cheeks and long-lashed grey eyes and a pretty drooping mouth. In repose the face was pathetic. The thin lips, when set together, gave it, however, a hard look which detracted from its charm, and the somewhat piquant nose and chin might become nut-crackers, like those of the old woman, when the softness of youth had departed.

Mary Curtis was a dressmaker by profession. She had earned her own living since her parents died, and she was now four-and-twenty. She lived by herself in one room in a little street leading out of Burdett Road in Mile End, but she was so respectable that no one ever said a word against her character. She went to a shop in Whitechapel, for which she made dresses, every morning and came back at six or seven most evenings. Her time was so fully occupied that she could not have much opportunity to visit the sick, even if she had desired to do so. But Mrs. Dowie was the

grandmother of her great friend Jessie, who had worked with her ever since she had been apprenticed. The two had been inseparable, but a year ago Jessie had died of the influenza, and it seemed a natural thing for Mary to try to fill her vacant place in the life of the poor lonely creature who was left. Mrs. Dowie was allowed half-a-crown a week from the parish. Jessie had helped to eke out this pittance. Now, Mary gave her occasional aid. She bought such little delicacies as she could afford. It was a pleasure to her to do this. Jessie had been more than a sister to the sisterless orphan, and besides, Mary was fond of Mrs. Dowie for her own sake. The old woman was patient on the whole. And she was very grateful to Mary, and looked forward to her daily visit as *the* pleasure of her dreary life. Mary had a respect for Mrs. Dowie. She was not a particularly religious girl herself, though she was upright and honest, but she had a great reverence for those who professed religion. She admired Mrs. Dowie, because the latter liked to hear the psalms, and could extract comfort from them. She thought her almost a saint.

Certainly Mrs. Dowie seemed to enjoy the reading. She closed her eyes, and the expression of her face temporarily redeemed its ugliness. It was as if an inner light shone upon it. Now and then when Mary paused, she said in a whisper, 'It's beautiful,' and when the girl finally laid down the book she looked at her with her dim eyes and said, 'God bless you!'

When Mary had put the book back in her pocket she sat quite still for a while, her small hands with the pricked fingers lying loosely on her lap. Opposite to her, nailed on the wall, was its one adornment. It was a black-edged card on which were stamped white angels with drooping wings; and between the angels was written :

In memoriam.

Jessie Mabel Dowie,
Who entered into rest

October 3rd, 1890.

Aged twenty-three years, ten months.

'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.'

Mary could not see the words on the card, but she knew them by heart. Had she not chosen and paid for them herself, and was there not one hanging in her own little room at home?

Presently she said sorrowfully :

'It seems a very long time.'

'What do, my dear?'

‘Since she died. So many things have happened.’

‘Jessie was the best girl I ever knew. And what does she have for it all? She fell in love with a man as wasn’t good enough for her; and when they’d walked two years she had to give him up along of his bad habits. Then she was always worrying as to if it was right and wouldn’t look at anyone else; and then she died. There are lots of bad girls, lots, who are happier than Jessie was.’

The old woman shook her head.

‘You know more about it than me, my dear,’ she said. ‘Jessie weren’t one to talk much. I think she’s happy now. She was always one to cling to religion.’

‘Yes,’ said Mary softly. The little prayer-book had belonged to Jessie.

She got up suddenly.

‘I’m going,’ she said. ‘I can’t do you any good to-night. I’m tired and cross.’

She bent over the bed and kissed the unlovely face. Then she extinguished the light and went downstairs and homeward.

Her own room on the top story of the house was very small, but it was neat and even pretty. The chair-bedstead and the table covered with a red cloth were quite nice pieces of furniture; and a bright-coloured shawl hid the dress and jacket which were hanging on the door. Mary could not realise her ideals of house decoration, but she did her best. On the mantelpiece was a vase Jessie had given her; there were autumn leaves and berries in it. There was also a portrait in an adjustable frame. It had been taken two years ago, one Bank holiday, by a man at Leytonstone, where she and Jessie had gone in the tram. It was not a flattering likeness of either of them. Certainly it did not do Mary justice. But it was the only photograph there was of the dead girl. Mary would not have parted with it for love or money.

When she had lit the lamp her eyes turned almost involuntarily to this portrait. Jessie and she had so often spent their evenings together that she looked naturally to this poor substitute for the living friend when she was specially in need of her. Now she walked up to the mantelpiece and stood for awhile gazing steadily at the inartistic representation of the common-looking young woman in which there was no trace of the sweetness of expression which had made Jessie’s charm. Gradually Mary’s eyes filled and her mouth quivered. At last she began to cry

softly; and presently she went down on her knees on the ground and hid her face in the low chair where Jessie had so often sat.

'Oh,' she said aloud, her voice broken by short sobs. 'I do want you, Jess. If you was here I could tell *you*. There isn't anyone else as 'd care or understand. But *you* would. You've been through somethin' like it. And you always knew what to say.

'Jessie,' she continued more softly, almost in a whisper, 'my heart'll break. I've been tryin' not to think all day, and now I can't help it. If I could talk about it I'd feel better. And so I'm goin' to pretend. I'm going to shut my eyes and try to believe you ain't dead, Jessie, but that you're settin' there and want to know. I'm going to pretend I can put my head in your lap and feel your hand smoothin' my hair. It's only make-believe, Jessie dear, like the children do, but I'm so lonely, and it's better than nothing.'

There was a little silence. Mary rose and extinguished the light. It seemed to her that she could talk to Jessie better in the darkness. Then she resumed her former position, and by-and-by the pretty broken voice was heard again. One who listened might well have believed that she had an audience, and an audience in sympathy with her.

'It began just after you died, Jess; a little after Christmas it must have been. I didn't have much heart for goin' out, you know, and I was so wretched without you, many's the time I thought I couldn't have lived on. And one day there was a meetin' over at the hall, and tea. Someone gave me a ticket, and I thought it'd cheer me up a bit. And I went. . . . There was a young man there as had come with Mr. Munns, and he happened to sit near me. You know, Jess, since you'd had your trouble, I didn't have much confidence in men, and I didn't seem to need a sweetheart, havin' you. And p'r'aps I'm cold. Anyways, I was never one to set myself at men. But this one weren't like them about here. He was like gentlefolks look. And I see he kep' starin' at me, not rude, but as if he was pleased to see me. And I pertended not to see him.

'And afterwards he come and spoke. And we begun to be friends. He was just the sort you'd have liked, Jess. And he said should we keep company? And I told him how it was about you and me, and how I didn't seem as if I could think of sich things then. And he said I had more need of a friend if you was gone. And he looked at me so—kindly, Jess.'

There was a louder sob than those which had preceded it. It is a hackneyed truth that the keenest pain is remembered joy, the greatest loss a recollected gain, when the present has not fulfilled the promise of the past.

'And—we kep' company, Jess. It began gradual. And I seemed to sort of soften. And I was inclined to trust in people more'd I did. And he didn't have any o' the faults I see in the most of men. He didn't drink, nor swear, nor keep hisself untidy. And he could talk of things we'd often wanted to know, books and sich. He was in a carpenter's shop, Jess, and I've heard them of that trade is refineder, just like them as works our way is over factory girls. And he b'longed to clubs where gentlefolk worked, and came and befriended 'em. And he'd caught their tricks. Oh, Jess, it wasn't any wonder as he taught me to care. . . .

'Jess dear. I got to care. I'm cold at times, and hard. But when I love I love faithful. There's you, and your grandma, and him. You've left me, and she'll go afore long. It isn't much wonder as I sort o' clung to him, Jess dear. I don't know as I could have borne them months and the spring and all if there hadn't been something to hope for. I got to look forward to seein' him, to havin' the flowers he'd get, and to walkin' out with him evenings.

'Jess.' Her voice had sunk to a whisper. 'It seemed times as if I was gettin' close to God. The world was different. It weren't all hard and cruel and dirty, and folks with hard hearts and slanderin' tongues, and crimes and sins goin' on, and none to trust to, like it have been sometimes. And what there was hard was easier to be borne. It was a lovely spring, Jess, and a lovely summer. I hadn't forgotten you, dear, and there was a sorrow in my heart for yer, but it were a sorrow that kep' me gentle, not like this that makes me angered, and I sort o' hoped all the while that by-and-by it 'd all be beautiful an' happy. And the autumn came, an' then he told me one day as he loved me, Jess; loved me faithful. . . . And I believed him.

'Jess, hold my hand, I'm comin' to the worst. I can't realise it proper. It was only this mornin' you see. I'll read it to yer, Jess. No, I won't read it, dear. I'll tell you. I'll tell you what was in it—if I can remember, Jess, for it seems to have crushed my life out. It wasn't long, just a few words. He wrote, Jess, that he'd made a mistake, that he'd done wrong, that he hadn't oughter have asked me to marry him, and he took it back. And he

couldn't——' she breathed heavily as with long-drawn sobs—'couldn't trust hisself to say good-bye, he was goin' for work elsewhere in London, and he believed we'd best part . . . part, Jessie. And we'd been very happy. . . . O, Jess,' she broke off, weeping violently, 'we *had* been happy! But it's all over; and I'll never care for anyone else. Jessie, can't you say *anything*? Tell me you're sorry. My heart is *breakin'*, Jess. Don't you *mind*, Jess? . . . O Jessie, darling, you're *dead*!'

Alas! she could deceive herself no longer. She knew that Jessie would never have let her plead in vain for sympathy if she were by to give it.

When at length Mary raised the pretty, dishevelled head it was almost night. She began to undress without a light. She made no attempt to eat supper, though she had scarcely tasted food all day. Just at present she fed upon her griefs and found them substantial diet. She turned down the bedstead and got it ready for the night. She said a prayer absent-mindedly, and then lay down like a tired child.

But she was not quite comfortless. The old bedridden woman who needed her kept alive in her a touch of sweet human feeling. Mrs. Dowie scarcely realised, absorbed as she was to a great extent in her own aches and pains, that she represented to the little dressmaker all for which life was worth living. She was a very poor substitute for Jessie, but Jessie had loved her and honoured her. And then she was fond of Mary and grateful to her. They talked together of Jess, and Mrs. Dowie shed tears whenever she mentioned her name. Mary did not cry any longer. She seemed to have wept away all *her* tears.

One day the girl had a holiday. It was Boxing-day. 'Mrs. Dowie, in spite of her expectations to the contrary, had lived through the beginning of the cold weather, although Christmas-day had been sufficiently dreary and cheerless within and without to have killed her if she had been any longer keenly alive to the influences about her. She was little more than a skeleton now, and her bones showed through the dry yellow skin. She was wrapped up as warmly as possible. Over her shoulders, as she sat in bed, was a little jacket that had belonged to Jess; the sleeves were tied together in front. Her bed was very near the window, and the parish nurse who looked in every morning had put up a bit of an old clothes-horse and thrown a skirt on it to keep off the draught.

Mrs. Dowie was slowly drinking the cup of cocoa which the nurse had made before she left her. It did not look particularly tempting, being mixed only with water; but it was warm, and it comforted her. By her side, on the counterpane, was a worn brown volume, containing prayers and meditations for each day. It had large print, but Mrs. Dowie's sight was getting very dim, and she could scarcely manage to read even when the light was good. Still, she liked to have the book by her side.

When the door opened and Mary came in she looked up with a smile. The girl was a pretty sight even for her old eyes. The wind had brought a colour into her cheeks, and her hair was blown into an untidiness that became her. Though she still wore the black dress and the straw hat, she had supplemented the costume by a coat faced with red, which she had made with her own clever fingers, and the berries had been replaced by red ribbons. It was not vanity, but instinct, which prompted this young woman, little as she sought for admiration, always to make the best of herself.

Mrs. Dowie's voice had grown weaker than it had been, and she did not speak much above a whisper; but the gladness of her 'Why, *Mary!*' was quite audible to and pleased the girl.

'Yes, it's me,' she said, smiling.

The brightness of the morning had put her in better spirits than usual. It is difficult to be quite hopeless when one is barely five-and-twenty and the weather is exhilarating.

'I thought you was goin' for a walk, my dear.'

'So I am, presently. But I thought I would spend a little while with you first. Shall I read to you?'

Mary looked at the book on the bed.

'If you please, my dear. I ain't never too bad to listen to them blessed words.'

'Well, you drink your cocoa then, while I read.'

When the reading was over they talked for a little while, and then Mrs. Dowie said:

'Ain't you never goin' to git a young man, my dear?'

'No,' said Mary, gravely.

'Dear, dear. Young girls ain't what they was. I walked with two or three before I took up with Dowie. Why, there was one of 'em a tinker. He made me a tin to keep tea in as I've kep' by me for more'n half a century. It used to be full o' tea at one

time. It ain't got tea in it now though,' she added in a whisper, 'it ain't got tea in it now.'

Mrs. Dowie was not as a rule addicted to reminiscences. Mary thought it cheered her up to dwell on brighter times. She encouraged her to talk.

'Why didn't you have him, Mrs. Dowie?' she asked.

'I forget, my dear, there was so many of 'em; I don't rightly recollect the reasons. I remember that tin though. Havin' it have kep' me in mind of him. He was a nice young man; he had warts on his hands. He weren't as fine as Dowie. But I don't hold there's much difference in men. When they b'long to you you gets used to their looks. I was a-thinkin' o' that canister as I lay awake last night. I ain't seed it for a long time. It ain't got no tea in it now. But I fancy I'd like to look at it.'

'Where is it?' Mary asked.

Mrs. Dowie hesitated momentarily. Then she said:

'It's on the top shelf in the cupboard behind some other things. Maybe it's very dusty. I ain't set eyes on it this long time, not since the summer. Dear, dear, what a while I've been stuck to this 'ere bed!'

Mary rose and carried the chair to the cupboard to assist her in reaching the shelf. Mrs. Dowie, groaning a little as she turned in bed, watched her with some anxiety in her narrowed eyes. Mary removed the empty bottles and odds and ends that prevented her getting at the tin. Then she reached it down, and blew off the dust daintily. She had a wholesome horror of dirt in any shape.

'Bring it here,' said Mrs. Dowie in a voice that was shrill and somewhat peremptory. The sight of the old tin had, for some reason, excited her.

'You'd better let me find something to rub it over with first,' said Mary. 'You've got a clean sheet to your bed, and it'll dirty it.'

Mrs. Dowie trembled with suppressed eagerness. 'Don't worrit to open it,' said she. 'It ain't likely to ha' got dirty *inside*. There,' with a sigh of content as Mary placed it in her outstretched hands, 'that's it. Thank you, my dear. I'm afraid I've been troublin' you. But I had a fancy to see this 'ere tin. Now, don't you stay here any longer, but git off for your walk.'

Mary wondered a little as she went away at the old woman's 'fancy.' She attributed it to the unreasonable eccentricities of

age, and thought perhaps Mrs. Dowie had been fonder of the tinker than of the husband she had married, and so cherished the souvenir she had retained. It suddenly occurred to her to give Mrs. Dowie a little surprise. She remembered the tone in which the old creature had said, 'It ain't got tea in it now,' and she determined to buy half a pound and put it in the canister. Her purse was a slender one, but she had no one to consider but herself; so when she came to a general shop that was not closed she went in and made her purchase.

Except for the pleasure afforded to her by this unselfish action, the walk was not a very successful one. The streets were full of holiday people. All the girls who were fortunate enough to possess this essential to a gala costume had their long feathers in their hats—feathers which went round the crown and hung down behind. Their satisfaction in their appearance was patent on their faces. They knew they would be irresistible in the eyes of their lovers.

Then the crowded streets troubled and dismayed her. There is no loneliness comparable to the loneliness of being in a crowd with which one has nothing in common, while yet one has no ties independent of it. The sense of isolation is little less than crushing. Mary suddenly turned round. A great, unconquerable longing to get back to the one person who made her world, the one person who needed her and watched for her coming, took possession of her. The feeling she had for the ugly, ignorant old woman was almost passion. She longed to feel the clinging touch of those yellow wrinkled fingers, to see the smile in the dim bleared eyes, to hear the muttered thanks for some little office rendered. She felt that neither the sunshine nor the keen bracing wind was congenial to her any longer; the one mocked, the other chilled her. The atmosphere of the close dull bedchamber in the attic from which her healthy nature had often shrunk, seemed to her now more desirable than that of this bleak outer world. She hurried back in the direction from which she had come, finally she broke into a run.

Mrs. Dowie's door was ajar. She pushed it open softly and peeped in. The old woman, who had not expected her back yet awhile, was dozing, propped up as usual, and with her head dropped upon her breast. She could not breathe properly lying down. Mary stood for a minute watching her, almost tenderly. How pathetically helpless she looked, this poor soul, who had out-

lived all her interests, and whose child and grandchild had died before her !

On the bed, close to her elbow, was the tin, the puerile object of her affectionate interest. After all, she was in her second childhood, and all children must have their playthings. Mary, smiling as might an indulgent mother who prepares a surprise for a sick little one, drew the canister towards her, and lifted off the lid preparatory to pouring in the tea.

To her surprise, however, she saw that the tin was not empty. It was filled with rather dirty lumps of cotton-wool. She began to pull them out, still smiling. The layer of wool was not deep. She then came upon what appeared to be a small bundle of rag. As she lifted this out, pulling it with some slight difficulty through the narrow opening at the top of the tin, something fell with a little clink upon the chair. She stooped and looked at it, then gave an involuntary exclamation of surprise. It was a piece of gold; a sovereign !

She untied the knot of the bundle hurriedly. Scarcely was it undone when, to her astonishment, there fell to the ground piece after piece of money, and rolled to the various corners of the room, while she stood open-mouthed with wonder. There must have been six pounds at least—so much she reflected even in her bewilderment as she watched the rolling coins.

But she had little time for thought. The noise made Mrs. Dowie wake with a start. She looked about her for a minute vaguely, then, as her eyes fell on Mary, who still held the tin under her arm, a look almost of terror gleamed in them, and she shrieked, 'Give it me !—give it me !' at the same time holding out her skinny hands towards the treasure.

But Mary did not obey her. Acting under she scarcely knew what irresistible impulse, she withheld the object of Mrs. Dowie's desire; she disregarded the feverish eagerness of her look and tone, and deliberately turned and emptied the contents of the tin on to the table. She wondered afterwards that it had not struck her that an empty vessel would have been lighter than this was. There fell out several little bundles similar to the one she had opened. She undid them while Mrs. Dowie begged and implored and wept, and it was only when the feeble creature tried to get out of bed that she turned and laid the empty tin in her hands. But it was not the *tin* she wanted.

'Give me my money !' she wailed; 'give me my money !'

Mary gathered it up in her hands ; then she flung the heaps of gold on to the tattered coverlid, and the coins rolled hither and thither, and some fell down upon the ground, while Mrs. Dowie clutched vainly at them, and others she scooped up with her long talon-like nails and tried to drop back, one by one, into the tin.

And Mary stood and watched, making no effort to help. Her slim young figure was erect ; her white face wore a disdainful smile ; her eyes were hard and glittering. All the pure love in her had died out—was quenched, as it seemed, irrevocably. She spoke no word. She only looked at Mrs. Dowie, and well might the poor creature cower beneath her gaze.

At last Mary spoke. Her voice was so clear and cold and cutting that Mrs. Dowie scarcely recognised it.

‘And all this time,’ she said—‘all this time you have been deceiving me—deceiving us all. You haven’t been what you pretended. You was rich when Jessie was spending her bits of savings on you—rich when the parish helped you—rich when you’ve been lyin’ there almost in want!’

Mrs. Dowie did not answer. She was exhausted with the excitement and the struggle. She had only strength to fumble with the money, lifting it up and letting it slip through her nerveless fingers. It was a curious picture, had there been anyone to note it. As for Mary, she could only recoil from the sight of the being she had revered, weeping maudlin tears upon her useless hoarded gold.

‘Yes,’ said Mary again, ‘you’re rich. If there’s one pound spread there there’s fifty. You can get people to attend on you. There’s plenty ’ll do it, if you show you can pay them, as wouldn’t when they thought there was nothing to be gained by it. You can easily find some one as ’ll even read prayers to you. I can’t do it never any more.’

Suddenly her voice changed. At the words she spoke herself a righteous wrath melted the icebound flood of indignation ; it burst forth now in a torrent.

‘Prayers,’ she said, ‘and readings about God, and pretendin’ to be so pious ! And all the while you was hoardin’ money, and actin’ hypocritically and deceivin’ them as thought you destitute. When I think of it, it makes me burn with anger. It aint any-thing as you’ve taken from me. You’re welcome to all you’ve had, for Jessie’s sake ; but it’s not bein’ what you seemed as I can’t get over. You’ve done me a cruel wrong, Mrs. Dowie.

Praps you can't rightly realise how I've set store by you and trusted in you, and fancied you was all you seemed; and now that's all done. I'd rather have thought bad of you all along than find it out like this.' Her eyes flamed. 'It's all been cant and hypocrisy—your religion, and what things you've said; you've never been my Mrs. Dowie. I don't see as I can come here any more.'

The old woman turned and looked up at her with the pitiful expression of a dumb animal which is receiving at the hands of a beloved master a well-merited chastisement. At her movement another of the coins rolled on to the ground and across the room; her eyes fell from Mary's face to follow its course. Then she pointed to the heap of gold which lay on the coverlid.

'Put it back,' she said feebly. 'It falls when I moves.'

'Yes,' said Mary, 'I will put it back.'

'There,' she said, when her work was completed. 'Do you want it put back on the shelf?'

'As you please, my dear,' said the old woman wearily. Her interest in her treasure seemed to have died out during the long pause when Mary had been doing it up.

Mary shivered a little at the term of endearment. That, like everything else, had lost its meaning. She had the intolerance of youth, and believed that where something was false nothing could be genuine. She no longer believed that Mrs. Dowie cared for her, but for the things which she gave her.

Mary put the tin on the shelf, and arranged the bottles as before. It seemed to her many days, instead of a few hours, since she had got it down. Then she crossed over to the bed.

'Good-bye,' she said, 'I'm goin'.'

'Oh, my dear,' said Mrs. Dowie, her mouth drooping, and fresh tears beginning to roll down her hollow cheeks, 'you ain't goin' for good?'

'Yes,' said Mary sternly. 'It wouldn't be any use me comin', Mrs. Dowie. We wouldn't be comfortable together. Nothing would seem nateral any more.'

'Oh,' wailed the poor thing, 'I'm so old, Mary—I'm so old! My bones is achin'; my breathin's bad. The Lord won't lay that upon me!'

'It isn't God, Mrs. Dowie. It's your own sin. I wonder you dare use that Name. You may say,' she went on, 'that it isn't for me to judge, but there's a harm you've done me can't never be

repaired. You've taken away everything I cared for. If you'd died I'd always have thought of you in a sort of way like bein' with Jessie. I wouldn't have had any but kind notions of yer, and when people acted bad I should have thought, "Well, if some as I've loved has deceived me"—here her voice trembled—"there's been others as I could trust. There was old Mrs. Dowie, and there was Jessie." But you've taken that comfort away from me. You'll make it the other way. When anyone seems good or right I shall think, "Ah! but so did Mrs. Dowie, yet she was deceivin' me all the while." Why, I'm wonderin' now if, after all, *Jessie*, who seemed an angel well nigh, wasn't p'r'aps untrue and shamming. I can't expect you quite to re'lise what you've done to me, Mrs. Dowie. You'd have to be me to understand. If I've spoke hard, you must forgive me. I'm goin' now. . . . Oh!' as her eye fell on the tea, 'I'll leave you that. I bought it when I thought you *needed* it. But I ain't goin' to take it away.'

She might have spared her victim this last little piece of sarcasm. Mrs. Dowie did not, as Mary had hinted, understand exactly why the latter was so unforgiving towards her, but she gathered that she had injured the girl, so that the latter was never coming any more, and that yet she had brought her a present and was not going to deprive her of it. She began to cry and sob like a child. Her evident grief must have melted any but a heart steeled against her by resentment. 'Oh!' she kept saying inarticulately, 'I'm so old—I'm so old, my dear—I'm so old!' But before long she was speaking to the silence. Mary had gone.

The girl walked home like one dazed. When she reached her room she took off her outer things mechanically, and then she sat down in Jessie's chair and thought steadily.

It was only the gathering dusk, and the cold which gradually crept over her, for she had omitted to set light to her fire, that recalled her to the present. Then she rose and fetched matches. As the light leapt up in the quickly kindled fire it showed a face prematurely old. All the softness of youth had died out of it. It was tired and stern and repellent. Those who have God for a refuge can hardly bear to realise there is no human creature in whom they can put their trust. Is it any wonder that those who have not this strong tower whereto to flee steel their hearts as a protection from their kind?

'I'll never go near her again,' Mary said; 'I shouldn't know

what to say nor how to act if I did. I couldn't be like I used to be. I can't sham. It'll be kinder to stay away. It'll hurt her less. 'Not as I can seem to care much,' she went on. 'No, I shan't be unhappy any more. People are all frauds and selfish. They ain't worth loving. In future I'm only going to think about myself. I'm hungry. I'll have my tea.'

When she got up her eye fell on the likeness of Jessie on the mantelpiece. She turned it face downwards.

When Mary went to her work on Monday even the other girls noticed a change in her. During the last months the change had been going on, it is true, but it had been gradual, and there had been something of pathos to soften her expression and keep her like the Mary who, if she had been too reserved to be a favourite amongst them, had yet been liked and in a way looked up to. Besides, a little glamour had fallen on her because she was Jessie's special friend, and everyone loved Jessie. But now the alteration in her was startling. She was like one who had sustained a shock which had petrified her.

All that dreary week she went to and fro to her work, speaking none but the necessary words, and exchanging no smile or kindly greeting with any fellow-creature. She came in in the evening and cooked her supper and ate it in solitude. Afterwards she read or did her own sewing. She did not think. She had nothing to think of. She even gave up saying her prayers, a habit she had contracted to please Jessie. If ever her mind reverted to Jessie, she would not let it dwell on the image of the dear girl-friend, lest that should soften her.

But she was not suffered to be thus blighted when she was scarcely out of her girlhood. Whether, in the course of nature, a reaction would have set in before very long it is impossible to say, but the reaction came. He who had been the cause of her first trouble was the instrument who saved her in her second. He had shattered her faith and crushed her hopes, it was for him to restore them.

It was New Year's day. Mary awoke to the knowledge that a fresh year was opening without interest. The last year had been filled with joy and with sorrow. It was dead and buried. The future held for her neither the one nor the other. It stretched before her a dreary blank which had to be lived through somehow. She hoped for nothing and feared nothing.

As she did her hair before the little square glass on the wall,

she noticed with scarcely a pang that her beauty was on the wane, that she looked pinched and wan, that her eyes had dark hollows beneath them, and that her very hair seemed to have lost its lustre. Last year there was cause to rejoice in her beauty. Now, what did it matter if she lost it? It did but follow all other gifts of which she had been bereft.

The postman's knock, though it was not heard with great frequency in that neighbourhood, did not give rise to any speculations. If she had reflected, she would only have imagined that, being New Year's day, someone in the house had received a card or a letter from an absent friend. Personally she expected nothing, and was consequently not interested. She started, therefore, with something almost like dismay when there was a rap at her door, and the voice of a woman who lived in the house said: 'There's one for you, Miss Curtis.'

She took the envelope and glanced at it as calmly as if the receipt of letters were a daily occurrence. Yet she had not had one since the fatal missive had come from her sweetheart. But when her eye fell upon the superscription she flushed a sudden red and involuntarily her fingers closed over the envelope. The handwriting was familiar to her. Why had he broken the silence he had himself imposed? Why had he written to her?

She stood quite still for a while; had not her natural girlish impulsiveness been checked, she would have torn open the envelope and devoured the contents; but in her present mental condition she was able to deliberate. She had put away her lover from her life, from her thoughts. Was it wise to reopen a wound which had, she believed, ceased to ache? Should she drop the letter into the fire unread?

She was almost capable of such an action. But, fortunately, the feminine instinct of curiosity survived in her, and came to her aid. It may have been too that her will inclined in that direction. At any rate, she slowly and irresolutely opened the letter:—

MY DEAR MARY,—You'll maybe wonder that I dare to write to you since the last. But it's New Year beginning to-morrow and I can't help it. I've been looking through the past one, and I can't but see I've made a great mistake which I must ask your forgiveness. If you'll let me come and see you, Mary, again, I'll explain proper. It takes so many words to make a letter clear. But I've seen Mr. Watson lately, a gentleman that used to come to the East and

whose father lives here, that he came home for Christmas, and I met him, and he stopped and asked after you, and when I told him what I'd done he said I was a fool and worse, and was to ask you to make it right. He was very kind. He told me he'd most wrecked his life and some lady that he loved by not trustin' in her love; and he said that when I thought I'd been actin' self-denyin' and unselfish I'd been really very selfish, because I didn't know women, and how they would rather suffer with him they love than be left to themselves. You see, darling, I fancied I was making a martyr of *myself*, and didn't see both sides, and that women like you puts love before comfort. It was this way. I didn't ever tell you, because I prided myself on being respectable, and I knew you thought me different from many of the chaps round that way. Anything good in me I owe to my mother, Mary. She's been an angel to me, and so she was to all she loved. My father was very bad; he ill-treated her, and drank and worse, and knew the inside of prison. He was there when my mother died. She loved him and thought about him, and she made me promise I wouldn't never cast him off if he come my way. However, I scarcely saw him except on and off, and he didn't enter into my calculation. He drank all he earned. Not long before I wrote to you I come across him. He was a dreadful drunkard, and down on his luck so as to be near starvin'. He begged of me, and I did my best. But he drank all. I see I couldn't help him but one way, that was having him to live with me and lookin' after him. But then I couldn't because of you that I owed a duty to. I was dreadful worried. He'd taken a fancy to me, and it seemed I could manage him a bit. If I cast him off there weren't anything but ruin before him. And I kept thinking of my mother, and it seemed she urged me on. And then I said: "You must give up Mary; it ain't fair to ask her to live with a drunken father. Why should she wait all the years till he dies?" There was so much to think of, and I couldn't see my way to doin' my duty to both. Praps I was headstrong. But I couldn't bear to see you. I couldn't ha' trusted myself. And I was a bit sorry after I'd written, doubting if I'd done right. But I'd chucked my work and all. I said I must go away. I didn't feel I could bear to see you take up with anyone else for one thing. I've regretted since that I didn't tell you all; it was pride. Mr. Watson he thinks I've been wrong. If you're still free Mary, it'd comfort

me if you'd write. P'raps you'll let things go on. My father can't live long. His habit is worse than I thought. And he's ill. I have much to bear, but I fancy I've acted right by him. This is a long letter, and I don't seem to have put it right, but I love you the same as ever, and I leave it to you to decide. If you won't forgive me having caused you pain (supposing you love me) for my sake, p'raps the thought of Jessie, what you said she always was, so full of gentleness, 'll make you do it. Let me hear soon at above address. And believe me always your sincerely and lovingly, from

‘JOHN STANTER.

‘P.S.—The thought of you has been a blessing to me these months. I love you more than ever.’

‘The thought of Jessie.’ Those words suddenly struck Mary with a new force. Hitherto she had overlooked them in the overshadowing importance of other parts of the letter; those bearing more directly on herself and her lover. She forgave him—of course she forgave him. She honoured him for what he had done, even though she thought he had not acted fairly in withholding his confidence from her. She forgot that he had made her suffer, because now he filled her with such wonderful happiness; in one way she rejoiced that he had sacrificed her as well as himself. It was love which had prompted his action. And she could trust him, look up to him, worship him as before. The man dying of thirst does not need that one should force him to drink when water is held out to him. Mary did not need any outward power to urge her to call back her lover and restore him to the place he had held in her heart. She wondered how she could have lived so long without him through that dreary nightmare time.

But ‘the thought of Jessie.’ She laid aside the letter, and moving towards the mantelpiece lifted, almost reverently, the portrait of her friend, the portrait which in her passionate resentment against all the world she had turned face downwards. As she looked at it now, remembering how unselfishly Jess would have rejoiced at her happiness, a pang shot through her. It almost seemed as if the portrait regarded her reproachfully.

She laid it pensively down. A sense of her own unworthiness clouded her joy. She compared herself with her lover. He had made a sacrifice for a parent who yet may have been said to have no claims on him, and even that parent's degrading sin had not

stood between him and his duty. But she! How had she acted? After voluntarily undertaking certain duties to the poor helpless creature who was childless, she had flung them all up because she was disappointed in her *protégée*.

'I can't even write to him,' she said aloud, 'till I have made it up with Mrs. Dowie. It 'd seem as if I was hypocritical, not what he thought me. I must have acted wrong, because I couldn't bear for him to hear of it.' She looked at the photograph. 'Yes, Jess,' she whispered, 'I'm goin'.'

She actually formed the bold resolve of staying away from her work. She had never done such a thing before, and she thought she might for once presume upon her usual punctuality. She knew that she was a better workwoman than most in the shop, and would not be turned off for the first misdemeanour. Accordingly, she put the letter in her pocket, and, getting ready with her customary speed, hurried off to Mrs. Dowie's. One or two people going to their work turned as she passed them. The signs of suffering are never totally eradicated from the human countenance even by subsequent joy; but happiness had done wonders for Mary. She was irradiated by sunshine. The woman who opened the door started on seeing her.

'Why,' she said, 'I wondered what had become of yer!'

'How's Mrs. Dowie?' Mary asked without vouchsafing an explanation.

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

'I don't have time to see her, what with the children and all; but Mrs. Bean, she met the nurse comin' downstairs, and she told me she was goin'. I wonder she've held out so long. Old people is wonderful.'

'Is she—dying?' said Mary slowly.

'That's about it. And the best thing too. What's her life to her, I should like to know? And cough she do at nights, that Mrs. Bean can't sleep a wink. It sounds through them boards. I wish she'd go to the 'Firmiry. I don't like it happenin' here. But, nurse, she put it to her. "No," she said; "I can't last long. Let me die in my bed." Still, I think she'll have to go, and that's the size of it.'

Mary passed by her and hurried up the narrow stairs. She was very much subdued by the woman's account.

She entered so quietly that Mrs. Dowie did not hear her. She was upright in bed. Her breathing admitted of no other attitude, her head being dropped forward. Her eyes were closed. Her

cheeks were hollow. She looked awful. Mary came up to her and touched the skeleton hand. Then Mrs. Dowie slowly opened the weary eyes and raised her head feebly. She thought it was the nurse come to attend to her.

'Not a bit of sleep all night,' she said in a dreary, complaining whisper. 'I'm worse.'

'Oh, I *am* sorry,' Mary said, stroking the hand still.

Perhaps the unwonted sympathy with which her daily announcement was received affected the waning intelligence. At any rate, Mrs. Dowie's eyes, which had been closed again, reopened and sought the girl's face, and a momentary light illumined them.

'It's—Mary,' she said wonderingly.

'Yes, dear,' Mary answered. She could scarcely restrain her tears. 'I've come—to read to you. Have you had your prayers this morning?'

The old woman shook her head. 'I—I can't rightly—remember,' she answered almost inaudibly. 'I—can't breathe. I may have said—the Lord's—prayer—I don't—know.' The old trembling hand went up to her head.

'Shall I say it, Mrs. Dowie?' Mary asked.

'If—you please, my dear.'

Mary began to say the only prayer she knew in her clear young voice, just now vibrating with sympathy and earnestness. Mrs. Dowie's lips moved (almost, as it seemed, mechanically) in unison. When Mary came to 'Forgive us our trespasses,' she broke down and stopped, making an effort to calm herself. She was overcome by mingled emotions. Mrs. Dowie waited, still with clasped hands and closed eyes. When Mary did not go on she regarded her wonderingly. The girl's face was hidden in her hands.

'As we forgive them—that—trespass against—us,' Mrs. Dowie prompted her.

Mary heard the tired, patient whisper. She looked up with streaming eyes at the old woman. 'O, Mrs. Dowie,' she sobbed, 'I wish I hadn't—kep' away.'

Mrs. Dowie looked at her almost inquiringly. She was so exhausted, so near the end of her struggle, that she no longer appeared capable of strong emotion. Her grief at Mary's absence had spent itself in the last two days. She scarcely seemed to realise why the girl was reproaching herself.

'You've—kep' away?' she said. 'Yes—I remember. Is it long? It's all——' She paused, her voice dying away. Then she

made an effort to speak louder: 'I'm very weak, my dear. You was angry at the money. I—I—ain't spent it—— Oh, my poor bones—no—I ain't—spent it.'

Then she made a fresh start.

'They said—the work'us. But let me die in my bed—— It can't be long now—it can't be long.'

Then she began to cry. But the feeble wail was stopped by a cough.

It was indescribably painful to see the poor worn form racked in this way, to hear the efforts at breathing.

'Oh,' she said; 'oh, oh!'

The sounds were like groans. She was bent nearly double.

'Mrs. Dowie,' Mary said presently, when there was silence again, 'you needn't fear as they'll take you away. I will stay with you, and look after you, and you shall have all you want.'

'You're very—good, my dear.'

Her lips framed the words. She was incapable of further speech just then.

Mary sat by her for a long while. Mrs. Dowie made no movement all the time. Once Mary wondered if she were dead. She would have given anything to undo the work of the last week. The remembrance of it would have seemed easier to bear if Mrs. Dowie had reproached her with unkindness or seemed to realise that she had anything to forgive. Her meek acceptance of Mary's absence seemed to the latter to make it more unjustifiable. Suddenly Mrs. Dowie spoke again. It seemed as if strength and memory had momentarily returned.

'It weren't all sham, my dear,' she said. 'I—I did love—the Lord. Jessie'd tell—you. I'd saved it. I—didn't rightly—see—it was sinnin'!'

'Don't talk about it, Mrs. Dowie.'

'I'm so old—and so tired. Don't—keep away.'

'I will never leave you.'

'Thank you, my dear—— The tin.'

'Do you want it, Mrs. Dowie?'

She nodded her head.

'Yes—I want it.'

Mary got it down and handed it to her. But she shook her head.

'No. I ain't—touched it. I've—kep' it for you.'

She turned her pleading, affectionate eyes to Mary. Then closed them again, for ever.

CYCLOPS IN LONDON.

'TIDAL BASIN,' shouted the porters, as our train pulled up with a jerk at the dirty little railway station bearing this name.

Accompanied by a friend, I had come to take advantage of the courteous permission given me by the Manager of the Thames Iron Works and Shipbuilding Company to visit the works of that distinguished firm.

'Way to the Works, sir?' said the ticket collector, in response to our inquiries; for the inhabitants of this neighbourhood wisely refrain from using the full denomination with which the Company is dignified. 'First on your left after crossing the bridge.'

It was a cold, raw day, and as we left the station we found that it had begun to rain. In fact, whenever I visit this region, it is raining—raining quietly, but steadily, with quite a business-like persistence. In the absence of authoritative statistics to confirm my theory, I should scarcely like to affirm positively that a fine day at Blackwall has never been known; but, from the copious supply of liquid black mud with which the streets in that part of the Metropolis seem invariably to be furnished, I feel strongly inclined to believe that the drizzling rain I have always experienced there is a permanent feature in the weather of the locality. Should any person be venturous enough to suggest that, if this is the case, Blackwall must be a well-washed place, he would be merely proving that he had never been there. The idea of the rain that falls in London E. possessing cleansing power, in however small a degree, would be enough to excite to merriment the gravest of those who know the district.

After following for a few minutes the route indicated by our friend the ticket collector, we found that his directions savoured more of brevity than of exactness; for, though 'the first on the left' undoubtedly led to one portion of the premises of the Thames Iron Works, we soon discovered that we had only reached one end of a collection of sheds and yards, which extended altogether over a stretch of land measuring nearly forty acres; and that to find the offices of the Company was no easy matter. However, after repeated inquiries and much fruitless exploration on our own account, we reached our destination; and, after a few minutes'

conversation with a gentleman whose name I have forgotten, but to whose courtesy I take this opportunity of testifying, we started under the care of a guide to see as much as was possible in the limited time at our disposal.

After a glance at two graving docks, one of which contained a smart-looking paddle-boat belonging to the Telegraph service, we entered the principal workshop of the engineering department. Here all was activity, accompanied unfortunately by a ceaseless din, which to our unaccustomed ears was far from pleasant ; but before long we were so absorbed in the many interesting sights shown us as to be almost unconscious of the pandemonium of noise that was going on around us. We found ourselves in a large brick building containing rows of busy machines connected by numberless leather belts to driving wheels overhead, which in their turn all derived their power from a pair of powerful engines situated in an adjacent shed. At first sight, however, it seemed more like a chaos of moving iron and whirling belts than an ordered collection of machines. Not a yard of space was wasted, and to thread one's way round the building was no very easy task. Everything was in motion, and one never felt quite safe amidst the mass of noisy, whirling machinery. It seemed as though, in this shed alone, every possible kind of machine tool was represented, but our subsequent experiences proved that the wonders had only begun.

There were drills innumerable, boring holes of all sizes through iron and steel articles of various descriptions, from boiler-plates to screw-propellers. Of the latter we were shown numerous specimens, including a large four-bladed one of novel design. A kind of first cousin to the drill, the slotting machine, was also well represented. Its construction and mode of working are quite different to the drill, but, as it is principally used for cutting square holes through metal, there is a relationship to the borer of round ones.

Lathes of all sorts and sizes were also plentiful, and one of them, a machine of truly noble proportions, was particularly interesting. In this case a large mass of steel, twelve or fifteen feet in length, was being rapidly revolved, while a workman applied a chisel which peeled off the irregularities of its form with an ease wonderful to see.

'That is part of the shaft we are making for the P. & O. steamer *Pekin*,' explained our guide.

The process by which the pieces of a shaft are fastened together

is very interesting. Two parts having been fitted together, a gun-metal collar, bored out of one piece to a size a little smaller than the shaft itself, is heated until it has expanded enough to allow the shaft to be passed through it. The collar is then left to cool round the join, which it holds together, when it has shrunk to its original size, with a grip that could be obtained in no other way.

Near here we saw a powerful-looking machine planing the edges of six steel plates simultaneously, while the floor around it was covered with the bright metal shavings that were flying off the keen blade. Another machine was punching round holes through an iron plate half an inch in thickness. It was fitted with an instrument something like a cheese-taster, which cut a hole clean through the iron every time it descended.

After spending some time looking at the 'light turnery,' we moved towards the pumping-room, and on our way passed the six huge boilers that supply the steam for all the machinery situated in this part of the works. It was here that my friend, who until then had succeeded in hiding his wonderment by a feigned demeanour of dignified silence, betrayed his ignorance of things engineering by innocently asking if the coal that the firemen were shovelling into the blazing furnaces was 'Best Welsh.' The astonished expression on the grimy face of the man addressed was a study, as he replied with a grin, that they only burnt 'Common Yorkshire.'

Arrived at the pumping-room, the principal features of the machinery were pointed out to us by the engineer in charge, who, at our request, put the engines in motion. The pump is used for emptying the dry docks, and is capable of reducing the level of water in the basin (about 400 feet in length) at the rate of eighteen inches an hour, which is equivalent to nearly 200 tons, or 400,000 gallons, per hour. The bucket or drum of the pump lifts $4\frac{1}{2}$ tons weight of water each time it is raised, yet so well made are the india-rubber valves with which it is fitted, that only three, out of the total of eight, have been replaced since October 1891. The engineer took a great pride in his engine, as was amply testified by the spotless condition of every part of the machinery, except the well itself, which was filled with a column of typical Thames water, if the black muddy liquid we were shown deserves to bear the same name as the poet's 'crystal of the spring.'

Our attention was next directed to the hydraulic riveter, an

invention which has to a great extent replaced the old method of hand-riveting in all the large workshops. The greater part of the Forth Bridge was bound together in this manner, and at the Tower Bridge, now being built over the Thames, a large number of these machines are at work. On comparing the two methods, the 'hand' and the 'machine,' as they are called, one certainly cannot wonder at the preference shown by engineers for the latter. In the first place, riveting by hand is by far the slower process, each rivet requiring a great deal of hammering to insure its being firm in its place. And, secondly, if the workmen are not skilful, the rivet becomes cold before the operation is completed, the result being an unsound or loose rivet, which has to be drilled out in order that a new one may be inserted. On the other hand, the speed and exactness with which the hydraulic riveter does its work insure a sound rivet, and avoid the disadvantages of the manual system.

The design and working of the machine are very simple. A boy having placed a red-hot rivet in one of the holes, previously drilled or punched through the metal undergoing the process, a block of iron presses against the head of the rivet, holding it in its place, while a small ram on the other side, driven by hydraulic power, forces down the projecting end, squeezing it silently and almost instantaneously into a neat round nob corresponding to the head on the reverse side. It is very fascinating to watch the rivets being thus noiselessly pressed into shape, one after another, until, so quickly is the work performed, there is a row of round metal heads, still glowing with heat. But, perfect as is the work done by this machine, its application is necessarily limited to such work as can be placed between the rams, all other jobs being done by hand. Thus, the men who have made the old-fashioned mode of riveting their trade are in no danger of being deprived of employment, though, doubtless, many of them have been forced to turn their attention to other branches of the iron industries.

After passing some new machinery for bending iron and steel plates, which was being erected on foundations of concrete sixteen feet in thickness, we came to the principal shipbuilding slips of the Company. These are so arranged that the vessels built on them are launched into the centre channel of Bow Creek, alias the estuary of the River Lea (which runs through the premises), and get a clear run into and across the broad Bugsby's Reach, as the Thames at this point is called, the total

distance from the slips to opposite bank being just upon half a mile. To those who are not well versed in such matters, I venture to point out that this fact is a very important one; for from those building slips that do not afford a good run for vessels taking the water, the operation of launching is both difficult and dangerous. At such yards it frequently happens that the precautions taken for checking the ship's 'way' prove inadequate or faulty, and the result is that she dashes on to the opposite bank of the river.

At first sight, I must confess, the slips did not strike us as imposing, being in appearance no more than two rows of shabby-looking scaffolding, with some muddy planking running down the centre and disappearing into the black waters of the Lea; but, when we learned their history, a sort of veneration grew up in our minds for the apparently humble stocks before us.

The last occupants of these yards were the *Grafton* and the *Theseus*, two of the eight first-class protected cruisers ordered by the late Government under the Naval Defence Act, the most famous of the class being perhaps the *Royal Arthur*, launched by the Queen last year at Portsmouth. These vessels (which we afterwards visited at the Victoria Docks, where they are being fitted up) are sister ships of 7,350 tons, having a length of 360 feet. Their engines are designed to develop 12,000 horse-power, which is expected to give them a speed of nearly twenty knots an hour. But magnificent as are these specimens of modern naval architecture, the shipbuilding record of the firm contains many larger vessels.

Close to the dry docks are the 'sheer legs,' capable of lifting eighty tons. The 'sheer legs' (simply an immense tripod derrick) are used for the lifting of boilers, and other very heavy weights, into vessels alongside them. These particular ones seemed of huge height; and a fine view could no doubt be obtained from their top; but we had no great wish to see for ourselves, as there was apparently no way up except by some iron rungs rivetted to the after or hind leg, climbing being, therefore, a difficult and rather dangerous operation.

In 1860 the *Warrior*, the first sea-going iron-built armour-plated ship in the Royal Navy, was launched from the Thames Iron Works. Three years later the gigantic *Minotaur* took the water; but this vessel, which is the longest ironclad under the British flag, proved a turning point in naval construction. Many other vessels followed, including the *Superb*, a central battery ship of 9,000

tons, until, coming to more modern times, the *Benbow* glided down the ways in 1885. This vessel is one of the six battle ships forming the 'Admiral' class, and is a sister to H.M.S. *Howe*, which went ashore at Ferrol a short time ago. It is sufficient to say that this monster, considered by many to be, until the completion of the *Royal Sovereign*, the most formidable warship afloat, has a displacement of 10,600 tons and a speed of sixteen knots. She is protected by a steel armour belt of 18 inches thickness, = 24 inches of iron, and carries two 111-ton guns, in addition to an auxiliary battery of twenty-five smaller guns; the single discharge of this vessel's broadsides being nearly four thousand pounds in weight. In 1887 came the *Sanspareil*, sister to the flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron, the *Victoria*; but, though of a different design, in size and power she is similar to the *Benbow*. Altogether the Company has built eight hundred vessels; of a total displacement of 380,000 tons. Among these are several of most novel design, such as the *Pervenetz*, the first Russian ironclad; the *Vasco Da Gama*, the only Portuguese battleship, and the *Cleopatra*, built expressly for the transport of the famous Cleopatra's Needle to the Embankment, where it now stands.

The last vessel of exceptional importance built by the firm was the cruiser *Blenheim*, launched two years ago, and designed to run at the hitherto unrivalled speed of twenty-two knots, or about twenty-five English miles per hour. I remember inspecting this vessel when just completed, and no other warship I have ever seen brought home to me more forcibly the rapid strides made by naval architecture during the last few years. Her long and extraordinarily sharp bows, her great beam, and the gigantic funnels required by her 20,000 horse-powered engines, all combine to give her a look of speed and strength which no man 'with half an eye for a ship' could fail to be impressed with.

Leaving the building slips, we resumed our round of inspection. Entering a shed on our right, we were shown some new machinery for preparing armour plates and bringing their strength and power of resistance up to the required standard, by passing them under rollers at a high pressure—a process which, up to the present, has not been performed on the premises.

And now the dull thuds, which for some time had been audible in the distance, grew louder, and we could feel the ground vibrating as we approached the place whence the sound came. It was the steam hammers at work, and, suddenly, as we rounded a

corner, a blaze of red light told us that we had reached the forges. The work going on just then was the process of preparing old iron for further use, after it had been 'puddled.' The pieces of waste metal, having been previously collected and broken up, are melted down in the furnaces and placed under the hammer to be beaten into masses of suitable size and close texture. The latter operation we stayed to witness, and a most impressive sight it was.

The door of a furnace was opened, and, out of its blazing interior, a workman, by means of a pair of gigantic pincers hung on a crane, drew a lump of iron, weighing several hundredweight, and raised to such an intense heat that, as it was swung round to where the hammer was placed, drops of liquid metal ran from its glowing mass, and blue flames flickered round its sides. The whole dark shed was lit up with the ruddy glare of the metal, and the heat was so great that we soon drew back to a respectful distance. Then as the huge steam hammer, 120 tons in weight, rained down blows that shook the ground beneath our feet, there flew off from the soft iron showers of brilliant sparks, in size and number so far exceeding those to be seen in an ordinary blacksmith's shop, as to dwarf to nothingness all recollections of the beauties of the latter scene. With a wonderful adroitness the workmen quickly turned the huge mass of hot metal so that in a couple of minutes, or even less, it had been knocked into the shape required and carried out to cool, a process of several hours' duration.

Some idea of the terrific power of these hammers may be gained by my mentioning that the anvils used (blocks of iron weighing some tons) soon get so flattened and beaten out of shape as to be useless.

But perhaps the most wonderful of all the various processes that metal undergoes is the casting in moulds. It so happened that about a dozen castings were about to be made that afternoon with a new kind of steel (patented, I believe, by a Mr. Radcliffe), which has so successfully withstood the severe test applied to it that the Government have issued orders for a large number of castings to be made of this material.

We were first shown the furnaces in which the ore was being heated, and a door was opened for us to look at the molten metal inside. But though our eyes were protected by large blue spectacles, the glasses of which approached opacity more nearly than transparency, the light was so dazzling that we were not much edified by what we saw, or rather tried to see.

The metal being now declared in a fit state for casting, the preparations for carrying out this operation were rapidly completed. The moulds had already been placed in a row between a pair of rails, on which ran a truck carrying the 'ladle,' a round iron vessel about four feet in diameter. This vessel having been previously heated by fires placed in and below it, was lifted off its carriage by a crane, and hung under the spout which served as a mouth to the furnace. Then, with their hands protected by large gloves, the men began to scrape away the sand which had been used to keep in the metal. After several shovelfuls had been thus removed, with a hissing and spluttering, some red-hot clinkers fell out, followed by dribblets of liquid ore, which, quickly increasing into a continuous stream, ran splashing like water into the receptacle just described. It would have been hard to realise that this quickly rushing stream of liquid matter was really steel, had it not been for the intense glare and fierce heat that it emitted, which bore witness, through the undeniable evidence of our scorched skin, to the tremendous heat to which it had been raised.

And now, the huge ladle being full, the crane swung round and, placing it on its carriage, pushed it along the rails to where moulds had been placed, leaving the mouth of the furnace still pouring out a stream of splashing metal. When the row of moulds was reached a tap at the bottom of the vessel was opened, and a jet of the liquid metal shot out. The first mould having been quickly filled to overflowing; the truck was moved on to the next one, the process being repeated until all the castings had been taken.

The moulds are made of sand, with hair or straw to make the material bind, and, where necessary, wire to keep it firm. They are modelled from wooden patterns, by means of small trowels and other tools of a similar sort, and, as can be readily understood, the trade of mould-making requires great delicacy and exactness. When complete, metal bands are bolted round the moulds, which are then placed in ovens until baked hard.

By the time the casting was finished we had so little time left that, after a hurried visit to the respective departments of girder building, electric light, and mould making, we found it necessary to take our departure, after having spent nearly three hours in the realms of Cyclops.

STRANGERS, AND TAKEN IN.

THE 'Open Air Hotel' had a fine antique flavour about it. We liked the name, so Bopper and I lounged wearily in at the dilapidated coach entrance.

'Do the gentlemen wish to sleep here?' asked a female antique, who evidently went with the building. 'Yes, the gentlemen *had* thought of such a thing.'

She regretted that the hotel no longer put up travellers. One could drink there, but not sleep. 'Doubtless the gentlemen can read?'

Her tone was not so hopeful as her words, so Bopper hastened to assure her that we were not so bad as all that. He was a little touchy on the point. He knew that our appearance did not improve as we went on. But this was only our fifth night on the tramp, and it was really too soon to begin remarks of this kind.

'Then, if the gentlemen will have the goodness to leave by this door, and take the first turning to the left, they will see before them a very suitable hotel, and not too dear.'

The 'Open Air Hotel' was evidently one of those delightfully confusing places that you enter by one street and leave by another—doubtless a most convenient arrangement in the good old days when the hotel was in its prime.

The first turning to the left brought us to the 'Three Travellers,' a good third-rate hotel. We knew from the size of Gien that there was bound to be an 'Hôtel de France' somewhere, but, too tired to move a step further, we dropped our knapsack—it was Bopper's turn to carry it that day—and clamoured for food.

Sipping his preliminary absinthe, Bopper reviled the Open Air antique for her low esteem in selecting such a humble house for us distinguished foreigners.

Dinner—our tramp supplied the sauce—put new life into us. We strolled out to see the town.

Sure enough, there was the usual comfortable 'Hôtel de France.' Passing by it without comment—our hearts too full for words—we came to the *Mairie*, in front of which was a warlike statue.

Being new to that part of the country, we had actually to ask the name of the figure. We were just on the border of the Ver-

cingetorix country. For weeks after we never had to ask the name of a statue. Whenever we saw a figure with a weapon in its hand of any kind from a horsewhip to a patent combination of mace and battle-axe we knew it was Vercingetorix. In that district they parse Vercingetorix as a common noun.

At any rate Bopper told a schoolmaster so with a point of interrogation, and the schoolmaster did not deny it.

After admiring our first Vercingetorix we wandered on to the bridge. The setting sun was turning the Loire into blood. Even Bopper, the Philistine, said it was fine.

We sat down in one of the embrasures of the bridge to admire the town.

Up on the hill behind the houses was a very fine old château—a sort of compound of the Norman castle and the old Scotch Baronial.

Stopping a passer-by I asked whose the castle was. The man seemed astonished at our ignorance.

‘But, to Mr. the Commandant,’ was the reply.

Bopper never liked to be outdone in hunting for information. He stopped a gendarme, and asked if we could get in to see the château.

‘But yes, perfectly, if the Commandant orders.’ From his grim smile we inferred that the order was not likely to be given. But gendarmes’ jokes are hard to comprehend.

When we got to our hotel we tried to find out more about the château, only to be met by gruff and evasive answers.

The crowning insult came. Never before in France, and never since, have we been asked to pay our bill in advance. Bopper stormed; my milder counsels prevailed. We paid. *Then* we saw our bedroom. It contained fifty square feet, and two beds. There was a 14-inch lane between the two beds. I thought of the last scene in the ‘Sentimental Journey’: Bopper thought of going to the ‘Hôtel de France.’ Bopper was right.

Once we passed a worse night. But our night with the ‘Three Travellers’ was bad enough to encourage early rising. We shook the dust of Gien from our feet at 3.50 A.M. Oh, the delight of that fresh morning walk along the Loire to Briare! The ten kilometres spun past without our noticing them. Our morning coffee! But I have promised Bopper to use no exclamation points in anything that he is concerned in, and he had coffee.

After a delightful morning’s walk of nearly fourteen miles we came to the dainty little village of Bonny, at about ten o’clock.

If you happen to be passing that way, don't forget to have breakfast at the 'Green Oak.' If you hurry you may even have the good fortune to be served by the same dainty maiden that Bopper himself had to praise. He exercises very freely his married man's right to run down all womenkind but his own. This morning he was graciously pleased to approve.

'Well, Kuppord, we've had a glorious tuck-in,' said Bopper as he filled his pipe, while passing out of the main street of Bonny, 'though we should never get another.'

The last house in the village towards the south is a long one-storeyed building, with a little double-storeyed portion at the end nearest the village. It is particularly clean. At the time we saw it the whitewash was quite fresh. A tricolor, which was warranted always to wave in the breeze by the simple expedient of being made of iron, gave a hint, which a long signboard made explicit with the word 'Gendarmerie.'

As we approached, the postern of the courtyard gate was thrown open, and a little man sprang out. He had a pair of dark blue trousers, with a darker strip of blue down the side, a pair of spurs, a huge white apron, his shirt sleeves, and a bald head.

'Halt there!'

We halted there. For though the little man looked insignificant enough, he spoke authoritatively, and we noticed at the same time that two burly gendarmes in full uniform (except that they had the peaked cap instead of the genuine full-dress cocked hat) stepped out of the postern after him.

'You are English, aren't you?'

'As you say, sir.'

'You come from Gien?'

'Perfectly.'

'Will you have the goodness to enter?'

We had the goodness to enter.

We passed through the court to a stone-floored sort of office. As we entered, the door was shut behind us, and the thud of a musket butt hinted that one of the two outside had been told off to mount guard over us.

'Your papers.' The little man held out his hand.

Up till now Bopper had been delighted. It was his first arrest. I had gone through it twice before, and I dare say I had crowed just a little more than I ought to over his inexperience. He thought we were getting equal at last, but he did not like to

be bullied by a man in an apron. Besides, the gendarmes were outside now.

'Permit me to ask by what right you stop travellers on the high road?' Thus Bopper, with much dignity.

'Your papers,' repeated the little man sternly.

'May I ask whom I have the honour of addressing?' Bopper was severely suave.

'But, the Brigadier Dupont, sir.' The genuine astonishment of the good brigadier was enough to make us laugh. Bopper only added sarcastically,

'You haven't much the air of it.'

Stung by the sneer, the officer vanished through an inner door, to reappear a moment after in full uniform. Taking his seat at the desk he began.

'Without papers, I presume?'

Bopper was busy looking for a seat. He did not relish standing while the examiner sat. We had to pocket the affront, however, through lack of even a form. Bopper angrily retorted that 'papers' were no longer required, that we hadn't papers, and that we would like to know what this detention meant. Dupont merely took up a huge yellow paper form, and solemnly asked,

'Your surnames and Christian names?'

We gave these, and a great many more items as he asked them, and gravely wrote them down. Suddenly he turned upon us with a 'Now I've got you' air and asked:

'Your resources, if you please?'

At this veritable 'stand and deliver' Bopper, with some pride, produced his purse, containing some 700 francs.

'You didn't look like it, you know,' murmured the thunder-struck brigadier.

When I flourished over 1,000 francs before him he could only add,

'Nor you either.'

Pleased at the favourable impression our resources had made upon the poor brigadier, who had probably never seen so much money at one time in his life before, Bopper deigned to produce our railway return tickets from Paris to London. Dupont admitted this as evidence. But his next question startled us.

'Can you speak Spanish?'

This finished our examination. He would give no explanation. On the sounding of a little bell a gendarme entered and saluted.

He was not our keeper, whom we saw grimly keeping guard at the door. The brigadier handed his big report to the man, who withdrew.

Bopper returned to the charge that the police had no right to stop us on the highway. The brigadier admitted that papers were no longer necessary, but—

‘I am instructed to arrest you on a specific charge.’

‘What charge?’ we demanded together.

He only smiled slyly, and told us that an old hand like him was not so easily caught as all that. The only hint he would give us was that it would be twenty years at the hulks if proved against us. We felt secretly pleased at the obvious enormity of our offence.

‘English spies, of course?’ sneered Bopper.

‘English pickpockets more probably,’ retorted the brigadier, who certainly scored there; ‘but no, gentlemen, it is neither. I may be able to tell you when I get a reply to my telegram.’

‘Do you mean to say you telegraphed all that sheet about us?’ asked Bopper, with a pride he could hardly conceal.

‘But yes, perfectly; it’s the rule.’

‘Where did you telegraph to?’

‘Ah! gentlemen make questions. Pardon me.’

Our conceit in our own importance was seriously damaged by the interim reply.

‘Commandant at breakfast. Keep prisoners till further notice.’

Dupont was annoyed. Bopper was furious. I am a philosopher. The bell rang again. We were conducted to a sort of cell, where we had a form to sit on. We were locked in. We both felt secretly aggrieved at not being put into irons. Even the cell was a fraud. The window was very high up, it is true; but there was only one iron bar across it—a vertical one. We had no pallet of straw, or any of the regulation cell furniture. Instead, there was quite a collection of riding boots and spurs and belts hanging round the walls. On a shelf there were several brown-paper bundles. Standing upon our bench we could reach the shelf; but self-respect forbade.

The pleasant feeling soon wore off. It was intolerably hot. We were not in the least hungry, but we were very thirsty. I ventured to kick at the door. A man at once asked what was the matter. Our petition was immediately granted in the form of a pitcher of *l’eau de vigne*.

Two hours afterwards Dupont came himself to take us out. Our examination seemed perfectly satisfactory. Besides, the police at Gien had a clue. Only we were to be kept till five o'clock in case of accidents. If no word to the contrary came before then we were to be set free. Meanwhile we were kept in a very mild state of bondage. In fact, our cell was the kitchen. Madame Dupont wanted to converse with the terrible Englishmen.

Dupont had again put on his apron, and was busy dandling a little girl of four. Madame was preparing the beans for dinner. Bopper soon made his way into the parental hearts by undoing a bandage round the ears of the eldest—a boy of about nine—and after examination prescribing some specific. His home experience gave him an immense advantage over me in the good graces of the family.

Soon he began to worm out of the father the charge upon which we were detained. It was no less than 'Aiding a Spanish prisoner to escape from the State prison at Gien.'

The reasoning was conclusive. He had escaped during the very night we had been at Gien. We were foreigners. He was a foreigner. *Therefore*, we aided him to escape. The thing was as plain as a pikestaff. Dupont, however, put it in a somewhat better light for the authorities.

We had been making careful enquiries about the prison. (So that miserable château we so much admired was the State prison. Little wonder the gendarmes smiled at our desire to get into it!) We had sat for an hour on the bridge carefully examining it. In our hotel we continued our investigations so as to arouse the suspicions of our landlady. We had started at an unearthly hour in the morning. What would you have?

Put that way we had to admit that our case did not look quite so well.

After judiciously submitting to a little instruction from Madame in the art of preserving beans, Bopper ventured to pump Dupont again.

'What was the Spanish prisoner's crime?'

My opinion now is that Dupont did not know. He asserted that duty forbade him to tell.

'Only I may let you know that he had only been in prison for a fortnight (his term was fourteen years), and that he escaped during the night in his shirt.'

We were getting along splendidly. Bopper and I were quite

sure we were going to be asked to share the dinner we were helping to prepare, when hey, presto! another telegram from the Commandant spoiled everything.

That wire must have conveyed a snub of some kind to Dupont, for he at once stiffened up in the most disagreeable style, and snapped out to us—he did not even put in the ‘Messieurs’—

‘You may put yourselves *en route*.’

We took him at his word, and were soon swinging along the highway. As we passed the big stone marking the boundary between the Loiret and the Nièvre we heaved a united sigh at being out of the Commandant’s beat.

We began quite to understand the easy descent into the criminal classes. For days after our arrest we honestly preferred to keep out of the way of gendarmes, and not infrequently we made little détours to miss the iron flag and the signboard ‘Gendarmerie.’

I know this sketch is incomplete. As soon as we got home Bopper and I tried to get the details filled in. We wrote to the brigadier, enclosing a stamped and directed envelope, asking what was the Spaniard’s crime, and whether he was caught again.

No answer ever came. Either the brigadier never got over that final wire, or police regulations make it dangerous to answer such letters as ours.

For myself, I would be quite willing to stake all the untold wealth I possess that the prisoner was retaken. The Spaniard who is able to escape in his shirt from a State prison in the middle of France, and get clean away, will give St. Peter his own work to prevent him escaping the roll-call after the last trump.

MEMORY.

AN UNPUBLISHED POEM BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

WHEN the dead in their cold graves are lying
 Asleep, to wake never again,
 When past are their smiles and their sighing,
 Oh ! why should their memories remain ?

Though sunshine and spring may have lightened
 The wild flowers that blow on their graves ;
 Though summer their tombstones have brightened,
 And autumn have pall'd them with leaves ;

Though winter have wildly bewailed them
 With her dirge wind, as sad as a knell ;
 Though the shroud of her snow-wreath have veiled them,
 Still, how deep in our bosoms they dwell !

The shadow and sun-sparkle vanish,
 The cloud and the light fleet away ;
 But man from his heart may not banish
 Ev'n thoughts that are torment to stay.

The reflection departs from the river,
 When the tree that hung o'er is cut down ;
 But on Memory's calm current for ever
 The shade, without substance, is thrown.

When quenched in the glow of the ember,
 When the life-fire ceases to burn,
 Oh ! why should the spirit remember ?
 Oh ! why should the parted return ?

Because that the fire is *still* shining,
 Because that the lamp is still bright ;
 While the body in dust is reclining,
 The soul lives in glory and light.

HATESU.

My first object in going to Egypt was to get warm. When the thermometer stood at 99° in the shade at Assuan, I felt I had attained my heart's desire in that direction. My second object was to practise what Horace calls 'strenuous idleness.' People said, 'Go to Italy'; but that was manifestly absurd, for Mr. Ruskin, the old masters, and a thing called the Renaissance, pervade the entire country, and make life a burden to one. Then there was Athens. Well I recalled Lord Chesterfield's remark that no gentleman was required to know Greek and Latin, but that he certainly was expected to have forgotten them. This latter gentlemanly qualification I abundantly possessed, for I knew that the simplest Greek inscription would hopelessly floor me. So I turned my attention to Egypt. Everything there was so very long ago, and the Egyptian tongue itself such a very dead language, that no one could be expected to work at it. I had not been three days in Cairo before I found I had made a great mistake. In that very insanitary city there are many infectious diseases rambling about; but the one you are perfectly certain to catch is a deadly thing called Egyptology. When once it grips you, good-bye to quiet days. It was impossible to escape it. I saw people just back from the Nile, literally reeking of it, B.C. being stamped on every line of their faces. When your *table-d'hôte* neighbour rattles off dynasties like a multiplication table, it is best to cave in, and go quietly with the stream. There was a man at Shepheard's who bulged over his left breast: that bulge was due to a bronze figure of Horus acquired by him at some ophthalmic village up the Nile. Horus never was made for breast pockets; he is far too knobly; but he was of such extraordinary value that his owner lived in hourly dread of the Curator of the Gizeh Museum swooping down on him and claiming it. Everybody seemed to have annexed something, and they fetched their spoils out surreptitiously at dessert, and gloated over them. Then there were two radiant American girls who babbled of Amenhotef and Usertsen, and talked as familiarly of Phtah and Muht as I should of a common councilman. Practically, unless you could talk Egyptology, you were cut off from all conversation; so I

was drawn into the current. I bought Renouf's Egyptian Grammar, and many books on the history, art, and religion of Ancient Egypt. Now, there are a great many approved methods of going mad. You may study bimetallism, or plunge into party politics or religious controversy. I believe George Eliot had a leaning towards a course of the prophetic writings as a short cut to insanity. I myself consider that a dip into the ancient religion of Egypt is as good a method as any. Give a few hours to the local triads, try and find out the one god of Iamblichus, work in the solar myth, and then see how you feel. I left the religion alone, and turned to history. This subject also has its difficulties; to begin with, it playfully spreads itself over thirty-four dynasties. Three great authorities, Wilkinson, Mariette, and Brugsch, never by any chance agree as to dates. At the very outset, as to the date of Mena, the first historic king, they vary to the extent of 2,600 years; this is a margin you would hesitate to allow to your dearest friend. Then, as regards the social and art life of Egypt, nothing is more healthily lowering to the modern mind than to find Egypt continually saying, 'I told you so; and, what is more, I told you so some thousands of years ago.' Until I went to Egypt I had a lively admiration for Mr. Edison. It is true his inventions seem to complicate life; but, at any rate, they were new. After visiting Egypt, I believe half of them are simple infringements of old Egyptian ideas, the patents for which have long since expired. Professor Piazzi Smyth is sure (I am not) that the Pyramid of Cheops contains a revelation of nearly all the scientific discoveries of the last 6,000 years. Egypt is a sphinx that is perpetually asking questions, and modern civilisation is perpetually 'giving up' the answers. Take the famous statue of Chephren, carved from a block of green diorite. Diorite is one of the hardest stones known: it holds its own against modern tools. How, and with what implements, did the old Egyptians carve it? Six thousand years ago bronze was common in Egypt: whence did they get their tin to make it? Six thousand years ago they produced the wonderful statue of the Village Sheik at Gizeh. It is infinitely superior to ninety-nine per cent. of modern English sculpture. Through what centuries of superb civilisation did this art develop, and slowly ripen to such perfection? After a preliminary survey of these and similar questions, it became manifest that, if Reason were to retain her seat, I must take certain prominent figures, and stick to them at all hazards.

I therefore selected Hatesu, Rameses II., and the Poem of Pentaur. I devote myself at present to Hatesu. You will observe that, in mercy to the British public, I have adopted a simplified spelling of her name. She herself liked variety, and you find her figuring variously as Ramaka, Amumos-net, Hatshepset-khnumt-Amen-Hatasou, and Hatshepsu. I was drawn to this queen for many reasons; amongst others, I saw a rubbing of her profile in the room of the man who had annexed the Horus, and it appealed to me. I thought I saw a vestige of expression in her face which Egyptian bas-reliefs seem to lack. After a time one wearies of the immortal calm and the monotonous repose, and craves for a touch of the more vulgar emotions. Directly I began to study Hatesu, I had to sacrifice one of my pet illusions—and that was the ‘modern woman.’ I was quite sure the older civilisations had nothing at all like her. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin set her going exactly ninety-nine years ago, and we have been developing her ever since; she is the crown and flower of our boasted civilisation; she is learned, athletic, independent; she combines the attributes of man and woman, and she breaks all conventional laws like packthread. Ibsen has put the coping-stone to her, and now she is complete. Hatesu looks calmly across three hundred centuries and says, ‘I was all this, and more.’ Hatesu claimed the attributes of a man; she dressed as a man, and even wore an artificial beard; she was described as ‘son of Amen,’ and in many of her inscriptions she is royally indifferent to grammar, and appears as ‘His Majesty herself.’ In energy, triumphant self-assertion, and the combination of manly qualities, with feminine tact and insight, Hatesu remains unapproachable. Her portrait bust shows us a woman of heroic type; she lifts her head fearlessly, and looks straight onwards. The eyes are deep set, the mouth resolute and masterful, the nose is Napoleonic. She came into the world about 1600 B.C.; so that, as Egyptian things go, she is comparatively modern; but she belongs to the triumphant XVIII. dynasty, and holds her place between two great conquerors, Thotmes I., her father, and Thotmes III., her brother. She was called the ‘Faithful Daughter’; for, like most notable women, she had an intense love for her father. At his death the throne passed to her jointly with her half-brother, Thotmes II. Now, Hatesu was in one respect like ‘Mr. F.s’ Aunt’; ‘she hated a fool,’ and this Thotmes II. was a dim kind of creature, good-natured, and feeble, as you may see by his portrait.

Hatesu took matters in hand at once, and, according to Egyptian custom, married him straight away. That apparently did not lessen the difficulties, and after a while death removed him, and left the imperial lady free. They say Hatesu assisted death—who knows? it is all three thousand years ago. Perhaps she opened the cage of life to the feeble creature and let him go. Directly he was dead, Hatesu made a clean sweep of his cartouches throughout the land, putting her own or her father's in their place. She was a woman who did a thing thoroughly when she did it at all. There were two paramount duties that centuries of tradition laid upon every Egyptian monarch: the first was to be a great conqueror, the second a great builder. To swoop down on outlying tribes, to return with prisoners and booty, and then to blazon the record of it on rock and temple, on wall and obelisk—that was grateful to the mind of Pharaoh, and acceptable to his people.

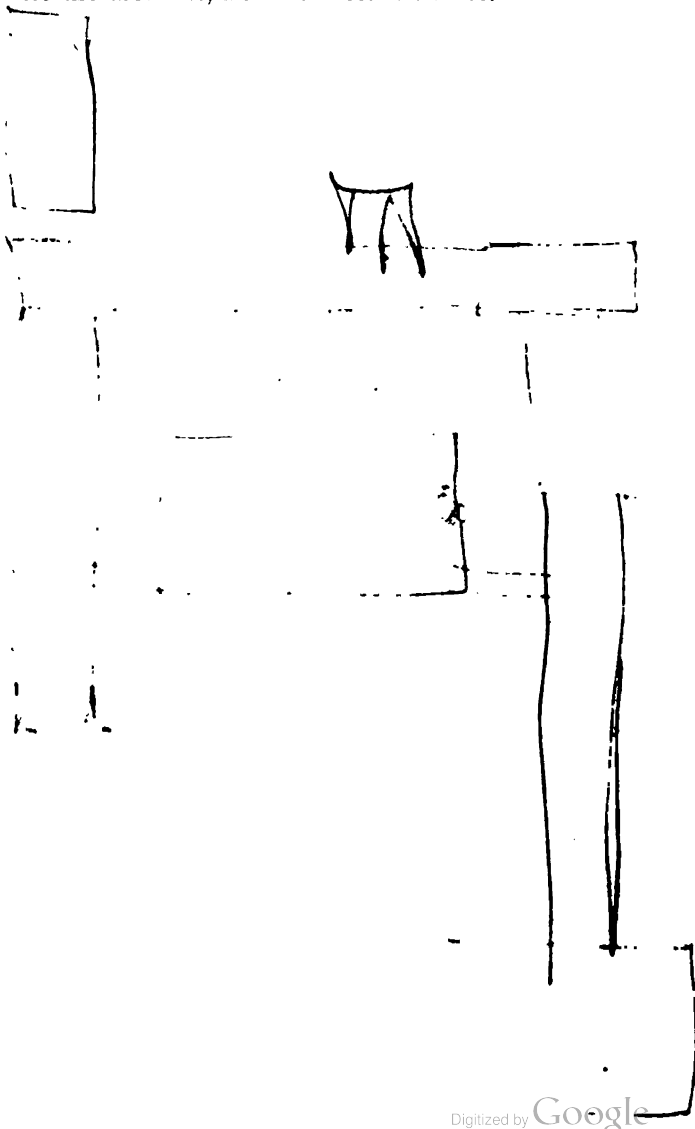
After that each monarch set to work to build a temple that should surpass anything done before or likely to be done after. Karnak was the usual outlet and safety-valve for Egyptian vain-glory. This vast collection of temples was practically always in hand; round it centred the glory of the priesthood, the pride of the nation, and the individual vanity of each king. Usertsen I. began it, and the last name inscribed on its walls is Alexander II., so that its history extends over about 2,300 years. Unfortunately, Seti I. added the great hall, and so took the wind out of the sails of all his successors, for that hall is truly, as Stanley described it, 'the grandest building which the world ever raised to the glory and worship of God.' Hatesu did not attempt to surpass the unsurpassable, but she discovered work to do of a distinct character, and there, to this day, amidst those acres of ruins, she set up the finest obelisk in the world. I should like to say the highest too, but the authorities cannot agree even on a simple point like this. One would think any fool could measure an obelisk; however, it is variously estimated at 108 feet 10 inches, 97 feet 6 inches, and 92 feet. Any way, it is the most beautiful obelisk in the world, and, when one sees that wonderful pale rose-coloured shaft outlined clear against the radiant sky, one thanks Amen Ra and all the gods that it has not been carted off to rot beneath the smoky skies of London, Paris, or New York. It weighs 3,673 tons. I give this vulgar fact to enable you to understand the difficulties of dealing with such a mass. It is poised on its base with the

most exquisite precision exactly in the very axis of the temple. Originally there were two, but the other is shattered to fragments.

Wonderful beyond all wonders is the cutting of the hieroglyphics upon it—deep, sharp, and absolutely true. They record that ‘She, Hatesu, the mistress of the Diadems, whose years do not wither, erected this monument to her father.’ (One never knows exactly what Shakespeare did or did not know, but I suppose we may safely say he certainly could not read Egyptian hieroglyphics. It is strange, however, that in describing his Cleopatra—who was a weak version of Hatesu—he uses these very words, ‘age cannot wither her.’ Is the ‘long arm of coincidence’ long enough to reach back to 1600 B.C. ?) She then covered the entire obelisk with gold, ‘that it might shine over both lands like the sun’s disc, pure gold taken from the chief of the nations.’ Furthermore, she records how the whole of this magnificent business was carried through ‘in seven months from the very beginning when first hewn out of the quarry in the mountain.’ How often, as the royal lady swept past in her chariot, she would be gladdened by the sight of her great obelisk flashing back the burning rays of the sun! Deep in its base she carved the triumphant statement that ‘never, since the creation of the world, has anything been made equal to those things set up by the child of the sun Hatesu.’ This was a very good beginning, but the queen intended to fulfil the two royal duties—first to carry out a campaign, and secondly to build her own particular temple to the glory of the gods and of herself. In Southern Arabia there was a district known as the land of Punt. It was rich in gold and spices, silver and ebony, and the great queen coveted them. Setting to work in a practical way, she built five ships of war. If the tribes of Punt were open to commercial transactions well and good; if not, they should be instructed by summary methods. Luckily for us, Hatesu not only built her temple, but wrote, carved, and painted thereon the most charming and detailed history of her great trading expedition. From beginning to end it was an exceedingly prosperous business. Much barter and exchange took place—one may guess with distinct advantage to the Egyptians. The ships returned laden with gold, incense, slaves, ivory, and ebony. Then Hatesu had a glorious time; a great national festival began, the great queen sat on her golden throne and all the treasures were poured out at her feet. All this is recorded in a series of wonderful bas-reliefs at Deir-el-Bahari, the great temple Hatesu built

opposite Thebes. No other temple in Egypt is at all like it; it is built in a series of terraces hewn out of the hill-side, and along the front run a series of marvellous carvings cut in a beautiful white sandstone. They anticipate those days long after, when the navy of Tarshish 'came once in three years laden with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.' Everything is here except the peacocks. Below, in the water, are carved many of the fish of the Red Sea, and so true to nature are they that each species can be identified, including a sole with one eye bigger than the other, which folks learned in such matters say shows a keen eye for nature. I dare say Hatesu had naturalists and artists attached to her court, and sent them with her expedition to Punt. She merely anticipated the voyage of the *Challenger* by a few thousand years. Along with the treasures came the Queen of Punt and many chiefs, and did homage to the royal Egyptian. Hatesu has represented the rival queen as a hideous dwarf, hunchbacked and distorted. (Did not Cleopatra describe Octavia as 'dwarfish'?) This may be feminine spite, or merely that the court artist found it easier to draw a sole than a woman. Never was a commercial transaction recorded in so picturesque a fashion. If one is to enter into trading relationship with one's neighbours, this is the spirit to do it in, and Hatesu's method of recording it seems infinitely superior to dull charter-parties, bills of lading, and custom-house routine. But now trouble was awaiting Hatesu. For fifteen years she reigned magnificently, keeping her young half-brother, Thotmes III., in subjection. Now the youth had grown to man's estate. He was a lad of very different metal from that other brother whom Hatesu swept away at the beginning of her reign. With the exception of Rameses II., he was destined to be the greatest of all Egyptian kings. For seven years they reigned together, but Hatesu still claimed the foremost place, and her name always stands first in the state records. Seven turbulent years, one fancies, and then the great queen disappeared; not a word, not a hint, comes to us from tomb or temple. As she was but forty years old, it seems likely that there was meted out to her the same measure that she dealt to Thotmes II. Directly the end came, her successor erased her name from all her monuments, and viciously hewed and hacked at the records of her greatness. Here and there, however, her cartouches are merely disfigured, not obliterated, and the name of the great queen still holds a prominent place on the long roll of Egyptian history. The end is

profoundly disappointing; we get to know Hatesu so well; and one is sure, whatever that end was, that she met it heroically. Jezebel, Cleopatra, Dido, Elizabeth, Marie Stewart—step by step we follow each stormy life till the curtain rushes down at the tremendous last exit. Perhaps Hatesu's end, no less than her career, was equally heroic and royal. She had reigned gloriously for fifteen years, she opened up a new commercial world for her country, she erected the finest obelisks and she built a glorious temple; then, in the prime of her vigorous womanhood, she steps out into the darkness, and the 'rest is silence.'



THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANK TAKES DECISIVE STEPS.

MRS. COLBORNE was both a good and a sensible woman; neither of which things prevented her from being, at times, an extremely irritating one. She had not the slightest idea that she was ever irritating; but she knew that bachelors, as well as men who by the force of unfortunate circumstances are compelled temporarily to lead the lives of bachelors, are apt to find the hospitality of their female relatives a restraint upon them; so she raised no objections in answer to a timid suggestion on her son's part that it would, perhaps, be rather more convenient for everybody if he were to domicile himself elsewhere than in Elvaston Place during the remainder of the Session. He had meditated this step for a long time, but had hesitated to carry it into execution; because, for one thing, the share which he had taken in defraying the household expenses had naturally been a help to his mother, who was not too well off, and, for another, he had been afraid that her feelings would be hurt by his departure. However, to his great relief, she reassured him upon the latter point, while consenting cheerfully and gratefully to certain financial arrangements which he had thought it right to make.

'My dear boy,' she said, 'I quite understand that it is impossible for you to keep regular hours just now, and a bore for you to feel that in a small household like mine regular hours must be kept. I only hope that before long you may have a big household of your own once more, and in the meantime I am sure Eliza Watts will do all she can to make you comfortable.'

This was handsome behaviour, and Douglas acknowledged it to be such; although, in truth, it had not been any necessity for keeping regular hours that had rendered his mother's house an irksome place of residence to him. Whatever might be the cause assigned for his change of quarters, he was glad enough to be able

to effect it with so little trouble, and he accordingly shifted himself and his belongings to the lodgings in Clarges Street which were kept by Mrs. Watts, who had been head-housemaid at Stoke Leighton until she had espoused the butler and retired into private life.

On the morning after the Duchess of Brentford's charitable entertainment he was dawdling over a late breakfast and mentally recapitulating some of the incidents of the previous evening, when Frank Innes was announced. His visitor, as he immediately noticed, wore the aspect of one who has a purpose before him and likewise of one who is doubtful whether his purpose will meet with sympathy or approval. Therefore, after pointing to an armchair and pushing the cigarettes across the table, he asked :

'Have you come to beg for applause? Well, I do applaud you, and I applauded you last night with all my hands and feet. It was a legitimate triumph—only, if you'll forgive my saying so, you must beware of imagining that triumphs of that sort mean more than they really do mean.'

'Oh, they may mean a lot,' Frank declared, seating himself and lighting a cigarette ; 'it just depends upon circumstances. What that little success has meant for me is that it has brought me offers which I think I should be an ass to refuse. A good many people were waiting to see how I should pull through ; and now they're satisfied, it seems. The long and the short of it is that, if I go in for the stage, I shall be pretty sure of making a modest fortune, whereas by sticking to the Office I can't hope ever to make more than bread and butter, and not too much of that. So I've made up my mind to chuck the Office. I thought I ought to tell you ; though I'm afraid you won't approve. All the same, you know, the stage is quite the right thing nowadays ; the old-fashioned prejudices about it are completely out of date.'

That was possibly true ; and yet one might be old-fashioned enough to cling to them. Douglas could not relish the idea of seeing his cousin's name printed in enormous letters and carried through the streets by a sandwich-man ; he could not feel that a gentleman has any business to appeal to the public in that particular way, nor was he at all convinced of the wisdom of throwing up a small certainty for the sake of a problematical fortune. After a long pause, he said :

'To tell you the truth, I don't approve ; I can't see much difference between a professional singer and a professional rider or

cricketer. Still you are your own master, and you aren't in any way bound to consult me. Your father won't be best pleased though, will he ?'

'Pleased ! Why, he'll be simply foaming at the mouth—fit to be tied ! He would cut me off with a shilling if he had a spare shilling to cut me off with ; only he hasn't, you see. In process of time he will most likely become reconciled to what can't be helped ; and if he doesn't—well, I must try to get on without him. He has allowed me to get on as best I could without him for some time past, and I really don't think that duty compels me to impoverish myself out of deference to his strait-laced notions. It is different with you ; because I couldn't have got on at all unless you had assisted me, Douglas ; and I'm not ungrateful, though I haven't said much about it.'

'Oh, you mustn't think that you are under the smallest obligation to me,' returned the other, reddening a little ; 'I inherited sundry charges which I couldn't possibly have disregarded with common honesty. And, talking about inheritances,' he added presently, 'I may as well tell you now what I have thought of telling you several times before—that Stoke Leighton will probably come to you or to your eldest son when I die. You may say that that makes no practical change in the situation ; and perhaps it doesn't, considering my age and the strength of my constitution. Still it is customary for a man to make some preliminary provision for his heir, and, as matters stand, nobody could call it very imprudent on my part to promise you a somewhat increased income. I can't specify the exact amount at this moment ; I should think that in a few years' time it might be considerably larger than I could afford to make it now ; but——'

'My dear old man,' interrupted Frank, 'don't talk such outrageous nonsense ! It's awfully good of you ; but at the same time you are talking utter nonsense, and I don't want to hear any more of it. A few months hence your wife will be back in England, and long before you die you will have sons as big as yourself to pay for and keep in order. Did you have a talk with that Italian chap last night ? I hoped you would.'

'I had a short talk with him,' answered Douglas, smiling. 'As far as I could judge from the very few observations with which he thought fit to honour me, he has not come to London precisely as an ambassador of peace. Not that he, or any ideas that he may have formed about me, signify in the slightest degree : I am to all

intents and purposes a divorced man, minus the power to marry again; and, as such, I have a right to choose my successor. I don't claim a right to dictate to him what his career should be; but perhaps I may make so bold as to indicate my preferences.'

Frank absolutely refused to accept this as an accurate or reasonable description of the state of affairs, and a discussion ensued which proved as barren of results as ninety-nine discussions out of every hundred do. Douglas did not care to refer to the letter which he had received from Bickenbach, while his cousin, who knew nothing more of Leonforte than that he was a friend of the Countess's, could give no plausible reasons for imagining that that lady had despatched her friend to London in the character of a go-between. The upshot of it all was that the younger man gained what he had originally called in Clarges Street with the hope of gaining, inasmuch as Douglas acknowledged that he was entitled to dispose of his future life as might seem best to him.

'I musn't assert privileges which you refuse to grant me,' the latter ended by saying, 'and, since you won't hear of being treated as my heir, it isn't for me to object to your strutting about upon the operatic stage. Only I do hope and trust that you are not deluding yourself into the belief that Lord and Lady Burcote won't object to it—and to you.'

Frank stroked his chin and said: 'You think they *will* object, eh?'

'My poor boy, what a question! I am not sure; but I should imagine that they would object even if you were—is there a millionaire tenor in existence?—well, let us say, even if you were a male Patti. However, as you are nothing of the sort and can't, under the most favourable circumstances, become anything of the sort for a great many years to come, the hypothesis isn't worth considering. Moreover, as a matter of detail, you would have to get Lady Florence's consent, which you haven't got yet, I presume.'

'Not yet.'

'Then, for goodness' sake, go and ask for it; I couldn't give you sounder advice. If that young lady's reply doesn't open your eyes, I shall be very much astonished. I don't want to appear unfeeling, but really and truly, the sooner you are brought to your senses the better it will be for you.'

Whether Douglas's advice was sound or not, Frank fully intended to act upon it, and he did not fail to present himself in Eaton Square, that same afternoon, at the hour named by Lady

Florence. She had asked him to come, and he could not help thinking that, in doing so, she must have been pretty well aware of what he would say to her, supposing that an opportunity for private conversation should be accorded to him. The only thing that troubled him was that he did not quite see what likelihood there was of his obtaining such an opportunity. He saw still less likelihood of it after he had been ushered into the drawing-room, which was full of people who were drinking tea and eating cakes. Lady Burcote, who had her bonnet on, welcomed him with a gracious smile, and with that extraordinary perpendicular shake of the hand which has, for some inscrutable reason, been adopted as a modern method of salutation.

‘I hope you are not worn out by your labours of last night, Mr. Innes,’ said she. ‘Everybody seems to have been quite charmed; but the heat of the room certainly was something appalling, and Florry has earned such a headache as her reward that she says she would be sick if she came with me to a drill-hall where I shall have to run off and distribute prizes presently. I’m rather seedy myself; but nobody ever offers to relieve me of tiresome duties.’

For obvious reasons, it was impossible to tell by the colour of Lady Burcote’s face what the state of her health might be; but Lady Florence did not look seriously indisposed. Frank, however, remembered that she had proclaimed her intention of having a headache, and drew deductions which were not unsatisfactory to him from the circumstance that she had one. What would be eminently satisfactory would be for her mother to get up and go; and in a very few minutes this is what her mother actually did. It may be surmised that Lady Burcote saw no sort of danger in permitting an outsider like young Innes to remain behind her.

‘I’m sorry to leave you, good people,’ said she, as she hastened towards the door; ‘but my time is up, and Florry will look after you. Breathe a prayer for me; it will be required of me to smile and make engaging little speeches to a crew of perspiring tradesmen and mechanics for the next hour and a half!’

So far so good; but Lady Burcote’s friends did not follow her example and quit the premises with as much alacrity as they might have displayed, had they known how very anxious her ladyship’s substitute was to get rid of them. They dispersed gradually by twos and threes, lingering in a most provoking manner after they had risen from their chairs and had put on

their gloves; one very objectionable old woman outstayed all the others, and evidently harboured the fell design of outstaying Frank also. At length, however, the mournful silence with which her observations were received triumphed over her pertinacity, and, as Frank held the door open for her, he acknowledged, with inward thankfulness, that Fortune had not been unkind to him.

It may be thought that Lady Florence, in making undisguised arrangements for this *tête-à-tête*, meant to be very kind to him too, and that, if she did not intend to accept him, she must at least have intended him to propose to her; but in reality such was not the case. Nobody takes precautions against obvious impossibilities, and not even Lady Burcote herself could have been more convinced than her daughter was of the impossibility of Mr. Innes as a marriageable man. She gave him credit for intelligence enough to understand that sentimentality is a luxury reserved for the rich and the disinterested, and that she could not be included in either category. She knew, of course, that he admired her; but she did not think him so foolish as to imagine that his admiration could lead to anything so preposterous as an engagement, and when she had invited him to what she felt must partake of the nature of a farewell interview, she had simply acted in obedience to the law which impels us all to get what we want, if we can. It was, perhaps, an inherited instinct that had caused her to bow to a law of which the overwhelming cogency had always been recognised in her family.

And so it came to pass that she was utterly amazed and taken aback by the impassioned declaration which Frank lost no time in pouring forth. It did not displease her to hear that he loved her; but it frightened her a good deal, and she told him so.

‘It is rather too bad of you,’ she added reproachfully, ‘to go on like this, after all the trouble that I took to secure a last talk with you! Because it stands to reason that we shan’t meet very often, now that the theatricals are over, and I am afraid what you have just said will put it out of the question for me to meet you at all in future, except as a mere acquaintance.’

‘Does that mean that you don’t care a straw for me?’ asked the young man dolorously.

‘Oh, I don’t know!—what difference would it make if I cared a whole stack of straws for you? You know what Mamma is, and what we have all of us been made to do. I suppose, if the worst came to the worst, I couldn’t be absolutely forced to marry a man

whom I hated, and perhaps I shan't be forced to marry Lord Galashiels; but I can very easily be prevented from marrying a man whom I don't hate.'

'You don't hate me, then? Well, that's something!'

'It isn't much. It would be if you had Lord Galashiel's income, but as you haven't——'

'Won't you for one moment—just for one moment—put income out of sight? Supposing that there were no such thing as money, and that we were all living in Arcadia upon the fruits of the earth, could you, do you think, love me a little bit?—about a tenth part, let us say, as much as I love you?'

The girl gazed at him for a short space, and then, much to his surprise and dismay, burst into tears. She had been brought up after that fashion; she had never been taught to control herself; she had been accustomed, just as her sisters had been, to give way to her emotions every now and then; almost the only lesson which had been forcibly impressed upon her had been that emotions have very little to say to the practical business of life. Her sisters had cried and had obeyed orders; it had been permitted to them to do the one so long as they did the other; and her own fate, as well as her conduct, seemed likely to be moulded in accordance with precedent.

Possibly there was no serious departure from precedent in the course adopted by Frank Innes, whose arms enfolded her, and who was whispering endearing epithets into her ears before she could stop him; but in all probability she was the first member of her family who had ever been invited, as she presently was, to brave the prohibition of her parents and entrust herself and her future to the care of a man whose own future was far from being assured. After a time she dried her eyes, thrusting him away from her and trying to laugh; but Frank declared that it was no laughing matter.

'Now that I know you love me,' said he resolutely, 'it isn't little every-day difficulties that will scare me into giving you up. We shall have enough to live upon; I'm sure of that, and that's the essential point. I don't expect Lady Burcote to welcome me with open arms; but what of that? She can't have everything her own way, and I suppose we might manage to get along without her benediction—you and I.'

The girl shook her head sadly. 'You don't know what you are talking about,' she answered. 'I am absolutely positive that

neither my mother nor my father would hear of our marrying; it isn't to be thought of! Besides, I am not of age.'

Did that matter? Frank was not quite sure whether it did or not; so he waived the point. 'Parents may turn rusty at first,' said he; 'but in the long run they are bound to give in, if the man who wants to marry their daughter is able to support her, and there isn't really the slightest doubt about my power to earn as much as we shall require. Anyhow, I can but ask Lord Burcote—and I will.'

'For Heaven's sake, don't do anything so crazy as that!' exclaimed the girl. 'You think he is good-natured, and so he is, in a way; but before you have said a dozen words to him he will have sent you flying out of doors and forbidden you ever to show your face here again.'

'Well, we shall see. But if I am not to speak to your father, what *am* I to do?'

'I don't know,' answered Lady Florence forlornly. 'Give up thinking about me, I suppose.'

'You might as well tell me to go and hang myself at once! No; I'll chance that encounter with Lord Burcote. It's the only straight thing to do, and I don't believe it will turn out half as disastrously as you imagine. There will be trouble, as a matter of course; but I should think we had pluck enough between us to face that, haven't we?'

'It isn't a question of pluck,' returned the girl; 'all the pluck in the world wouldn't help you or me to jump ten feet into the air. What would be worth tons of pluck to us at this moment would be an ounce or two of common sense: if we had any common sense at all, we should just say good-bye and have done with it.'

But neither she nor he, it must be assumed, possessed a sufficient share of the valuable quality alluded to; for before they parted, it had been agreed between them that Frank should at least try his luck. Even if he should fail—as she declared that he was inevitably predestined to do—he would not be so very much worse off than he was already.

CHAPTER XXX.

LORD BURCOTE DOES HIS DUTY.

FRANK INNES was young; he had always led as healthy a life as any man can lead whose avocations compel him to reside in London; he slept soundly and regularly during eight hours out of the twenty-four, and his digestion was in admirable working order. Consequently, it was well within his capacities to take a sanguine view of a desperate situation. Why, indeed, should the situation be accounted desperate? It would have been so, no doubt, if Lady Florence had refused him, or if he had no prospect of being able to maintain a wife in comfort; but, since she had confessed that she loved him, and since his prospects were of the rosier description, he felt not only entitled but in honour bound to anticipate ultimate success. He was, of course, prepared for a preliminary rebuff, just as he was prepared for that vituperative epistle which was sure to be hurled at him from Scotland in answer to his announcement that he proposed to seek his fortune as a public singer; but these were obstacles to deter the timid, not the resolute, and he had few misgivings as to his power to surmount them and to pass the winning-post a long way in advance of that heavy competitor of his, Lord Galashiels.

It was, therefore, without serious alarm, though not without anticipation of an unpleasant quarter of an hour, that he returned to Eaton Square early on the ensuing morning and asked to see Lord Burcote. Lady Florence had told him that, if he was determined to speak to her father, his best plan would be to call about breakfast-time. 'I don't suppose anything can make much difference,' she had said; 'still, as a rule, Papa is more amiable just after breakfast than at any other hour of the day—that is, unless his letters have been particularly disagreeable.'

Frank saw some reason to apprehend that Lord Burcote's letters had been more disagreeable than usual on that especial morning; for when his lordship entered the library, into which the young man had been ushered, there were heavy clouds upon his brow and his lips were tightly set. People who were in the habit of buying horses of Lord Burcote or selling horses to him knew that he could look uncommonly grim at times, and were aware that when his lower jaw began to project, there was little or

no hope of getting the better of him. His lower jaw was ominously prominent as he said :

‘Good morning, Mr. Innes. You want to speak to me about something?’

Yes,’ answered Frank, who had made up his mind not to show the white feather, and who recognised the futility of attempting to break matters gently; ‘I want to speak to you about something which I’m afraid you won’t like. The fact is that, yesterday afternoon, I told your daughter I loved her, and asked her to marry me.’

‘That,’ remarked Lord Burcote, ‘was pretty cool of you.’

‘I know it was; but I couldn’t help myself: there are things which no human being can help saying when he gets the chance. Of course I haven’t the smallest pretension to be Lady Florence’s equal, and I dare say you will think that she ought to have refused me point-blank. But she didn’t. And, as she didn’t, I could do no less than apply to you and endeavour to show you that, if you give your consent to our marriage, you won’t be handing your daughter over to an absolute pauper. At the present moment, I confess, I am about as poor as I can be; but by this time next year, if all goes well, I shall be quite comfortably off. I have brought a few letters with me for you to look at: you will see by them that my voice is worth money, and that, if I sing in public next season—as I mean to do—I shan’t want for engagements.’

‘I won’t trouble you to exhibit your correspondence, thank you,’ answered Lord Burcote. ‘I sincerely hope, for your sake, that you will contract a large number of satisfactory engagements; but an engagement to my daughter will not be one of them. I don’t know whether you wish me to give my reasons for declining this honour. I will, if you like; but I should think it would be superfluous.’

‘Certainly,’ replied Frank, ‘it would be superfluous to demonstrate to me that I am not what the world at large would call a suitable match for her; I don’t assert that I am. Still this is a free country, Lord Burcote, and if your daughter is content to accept what I have to offer——’

‘Oh, but she isn’t,’ interrupted Lord Burcote; ‘that’s just where you make a mistake. I may as well tell you at once that she has spoken to her mother and to me about this stupid affair, and she has been made to understand that it can’t possibly be

allowed to go any farther. I don't blame you—it is ridiculous to blame anybody in cases of this kind—but I trust that, for your own sake as well as for ours, you will see the propriety of retiring quietly. Why make a fuss when it is so obvious that you can gain nothing by fussing?’

‘I don't know what you mean by making a fuss,’ returned Frank; ‘but I know that I shan't retire, either quietly or noisily, until I hear from Lady Florence herself that she has changed her mind.’

‘My good man, she hasn't a mind to change. She may have, or think she has, some sort of vague fancy for you; but it is out of the question for her to indulge it, and neither her mother nor I can entertain your suggestion for a moment. Between ourselves, I should be greatly obliged if you would go away before her mother comes in here and says nasty things to you. You will have to go away in any case, don't you see; and one would rather not have a scene if one could avoid it.’

The scene, however, could not be avoided. Lady Burcote may have distrusted the firmness of her lord and master, or she may have been unwilling to deny herself the satisfaction of telling some home truths to one who had so shamefully abused her hospitality: at all events, she entered the room before Frank had time to make any rejoinder, and apostrophised him in a tone akin to that which she might have employed towards some dishonest tradesman.

‘Really, Mr. Innes,’ she began, ‘I am astounded at your impudence in coming here and worrying Lord Burcote after the manner in which you have behaved. Your conduct has been simply infamous; but it would be a waste of time and breath to dwell upon that, and perhaps I ought to have known better than to admit you into the house. The least you can do now is to leave it immediately; for I need scarcely tell you that our acquaintance must be considered at an end.’

‘I am not a bit ashamed of anything that I have done, Lady Burcote,’ returned Frank, ‘and I am not going to take my dismissal from you. As far as blood goes, ours is about as good as yours; so that it is a mere question of money. I admit that I haven't much money in the bank as yet; but I was saying just now that I have had offers of lucrative engagements as a public singer, and I see nothing infamous in my having asked Lady Florence to share my prospects, such as they are.’

‘Nothing infamous in your having asked my daughter to share the prospects of a public singer! Well, it is charitable to assume that you have taken leave of your senses. Florence is very young and very foolish; but I must say for her that she was not quite so idiotic as to allude to *that* agreeable prospect! Perhaps you will be good enough to accept my assurance on her behalf that she has not the remotest intention of degrading herself in the way that you appear to think practicable.’

‘I don’t think I am quite good enough for that, Lady Burcote,’ answered Frank, whose temper was beginning to give way a little. ‘You have already called me infamous; so you won’t be surprised to hear that my infamy goes the length of suspecting your veracity. I knew you would object to the engagement, and I don’t quarrel with you for objecting to it, but I won’t be rejected simply because you are pleased to say that it is degrading to sing in public. If Lady Florence had chosen to reject me for that reason, or for any other reason, I should have had to submit; only, as you know, she hasn’t rejected me.’

Lord Burcote, who had sat, with his hands in his pockets, listening to the above dialogue, and who, notwithstanding his stern expression of countenance, had probably been secretly longing to effect his escape, here remarked: ‘I think, Selina, you had better oblige Mr. Innes. Send for the girl and let her reject him formally. Then, I suppose, he will see that there is no more to be said.’

Lady Burcote was not accustomed to being defied, and would have preferred to sweep all troublesome and obstructive individuals out of her path with her own hand; but, reflecting that, when an object has to be accomplished, it is always advisable to accomplish it by the most effectual means at command, she rang the bell and told the servant who answered it to summon her daughter. After a few minutes, during which the combatants neither looked at nor addressed one another, Lady Florence appeared, with a pale, frightened face.

‘Florence,’ said her mother, ‘Mr. Innes desires—rather inconsiderately, I think, but that is more his affair than ours—to hear from your own lips that you are sorry for having been betrayed into making a fool of yourself yesterday, and that you have no idea of disobeying us by engaging yourself to him.’

Lady Florence looked down at the carpet and murmured: ‘I told him at the time that you would never hear of it.’

'Yes, my dear; and he was probably aware of that at the time, without your telling him. But what your father seems to think it necessary for you to say to Mr. Innes now is that you refuse him of your own accord.'

Then Lady Florence raised her eyes and met those of her lover. 'I'm afraid I must,' said she. 'I wish you hadn't insisted upon my saying so—though it was nice of you to insist upon it—and—and—I'm sorry. But I'm afraid I must.'

'I won't take that as an answer,' cried Frank hotly; 'you have been intimidated, and your aren't responsible for your words. Engagement or no engagement, I don't count myself released from my promise, and I hope you won't count yourself released from yours.'

Lady Burcote opened her lips to speak, but thought better of it. Obviously the moment had arrived for the head of the family to assert himself, and she made an imperious sign to him to that effect. Thereupon Lord Burcote pulled himself together and discharged a painful duty with dignity.

'Mr. Innes,' said he, 'you cannot, as a gentleman, persist. You asked for a distinct rejection from my daughter herself, and you have been given what you asked for; you really must not expect our forbearance to stretch any farther than that.' His lordship paused for an instant, and then added, somewhat irritably: 'I have told you already that I don't blame you; but I shall blame you very much indeed if you don't go away immediately. Surely it must be evident to you by this time that the only thing you can do is to go away!'

It was indeed evident that, since Lady Florence remained silent, that was the only thing to be done; yet Frank was reluctant to acknowledge himself beaten. He picked up his hat and stick, and said:

'Of course I can't stay here after you have requested me to go away, Lord Burcote; only, before I go, I wish to repeat that I consider myself dismissed by you, not by your daughter. I am still bound to her, although you seem to have frightened her into denying that she is bound to me.'

Lady Florence glanced up at him quickly and murmured: 'It wouldn't be of the slightest use for me to pretend that we were engaged; I warned you that it wouldn't. And all I can say is that, come what may, I won't marry Lord Gal——'

'Florence!' interrupted her mother sharply, 'you forget where

you are and what you are saying. Now that Mr. Innes knows all he can possibly require to know, you had better leave us.'

Lady Florence obediently withdrew ; and Frank, after allowing her sufficient time to get upstairs, followed her example. His defeat was absolute ; yet he was not wholly disconsolate ; for the girl, before leaving the room, had contrived to throw him a swift glance of which he had correctly interpreted the significance. She was resigned to bidding him farewell, because everybody must needs be resigned to the inevitable ; but, in spite of all, she loved him and meant to be true to him.

That was all very well, so far as it went ; the misfortune was that it did not go very far. She might, and he believed that she would, hold out against Galashiels ; she might for a certain length of time keep faith with a man whom she would never be permitted to meet ; but the most obstinate fidelity has its limits, and what hope was there of his being able to apply the needful spur to hers ? What hope, in truth, was there that when he should have made his fortune and she should be of age, she would be still unmarried and still tenacious of a bygone *affaire de cœur* ? ' She will have had to pass through such a heap of experiences between this and then ! ' reflected Frank, with a sigh.

Now, it was highly creditable to Peggy Rowley that when her friends were in trouble they turned instinctively to her. She was known to have helped many a lame dog over many a stile ; but probably it was not so much on that account that she was made the recipient of such numerous confidences as because those who sought her sympathy or assistance felt her to be eminently trustworthy. Frank, at all events, could not have expected her to assist him in his present unhappy strait ; yet he lay in wait for her, and, having secured her ear, poured forth into it the whole history of his woes.

' Well,' she said, when he had made an end of speaking ; ' I am sorry for you and even more sorry for her ; but I don't see what I can do for either of you. Fortunately or unfortunately, Gretna Green is a thing of the past, and if you won't submit to dire necessity, I'm afraid there is nothing for it but to possess your soul in patience. It is just possible—just wildly possible—that you may make a few thousands of pounds by singing persistently for the next three or four years, and that, when you have accomplished that much, she may be prepared to snap her fingers in her mother's face and marry you ; but, to be cruelly candid, I should

think the odds were enormous against the double event coming off. Love isn't eternal, you see : at any rate, it isn't so in the case of nine people out of every ten.'

'I'm one of the exceptional tenths,' Frank declared boldly. 'I can't tell whether she is another or not ; I wish I could. That's just it ; there are so many things which I wanted to say to her, and which I shall never have the chance of saying now, worse luck !'

Peggy shook her head. 'I really couldn't do it,' said she ; 'you must see for yourself that it wouldn't be honest or fair or in any way permissible. If it had been a mere question of a farewell interview, with the clear understanding that the interview was to be final, I might perhaps—though I don't know that I should have been justified even then. But if you imagine that I am going to add to all my previous indiscretions by asking that girl to tea and asking you to meet her, you deceive yourself—you do indeed ! I have a conscience, and I know my duty to my neighbour, little as I love neighbours like Lady Burcote and Lord Galashiels.'

'My *dear* Miss Rowley,' exclaimed Frank gratefully, 'I never dreamt of such a thing ! But if you could, and if you would !'

'I couldn't and I wouldn't,' returned Peggy ; 'haven't I just told you so ? Be off, and don't bother me any more ! I have bothers enough of my own, without taking charge of yours into the bargain. Besides, I have a prejudice in favour of keeping my hands clean. I won't be mixed up with intrigues.'

But if Peggy Rowley's conscience was hard, her heart was soft, and it not unfrequently happened to her to indulge the impulses of the latter, in spite of the behests of the former. She was doubtless unpardonable in arranging, three days later, a meeting at her house between Lady Florence Carey and Frank Innes ; but she did that unpardonable thing, and she has since openly declared that she does not repent of her sin.

Frank was not very much surprised when he was asked to tea ; he was not in the least surprised to find Lady Florence seated with his hostess when he arrived in response to the latter's invitation, and he was more grateful than astonished when, after the lapse of about ten minutes, Peggy rose and left the room, without so much as alleging a pretext for so doing. It was awfully good of her ; but then she was awfully good, notwithstanding her occasional roughness of speech. This was what he said to Lady Florence, who answered :

‘Oh, I don’t know. I suppose she means to be kind; but I am not the sort of heroine that she takes me for, and I can’t do the things that she would do in my place. What Mamma said to you the other day was perfectly true: I’m very sorry for having been betrayed into making a fool of myself.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ returned Frank audaciously. ‘You are frightened of your mother, as well you may be; but from the moment that you have acknowledged that you love me, you can’t want or expect me to give you up.’

‘It is I who have given you up; I couldn’t do otherwise; though I dare say it seems simple enough to you to say “I will” or “I won’t.” The only thing I can say is that I won’t marry Lord Galashiels, and I’m sure I don’t know whether I shall be able to go on saying that if he is obstinate. It is so easy for you men to get your own way that you can’t possibly understand how hard it is for a girl to get hers.’

‘I think I do understand,’ Frank replied. ‘I can’t ask more of you just now than that you should trust me and wait; if I didn’t know that you love me, I wouldn’t ask as much. I’m afraid we shan’t be allowed to meet or speak again, unless Miss Rowley chooses to befriend us; but I do want you to believe that, whatever happens, I shan’t change; and when you are of age——’

‘You will have changed by that time,’ Lady Florence interrupted; ‘everybody does, and there’s no help for it. I won’t deceive you by promising anything, except that I’ll drive Lord Galashiels away, if I can.’

That was all that he could obtain from her at the end of an argument which was diversified by some tears and by at least one embrace. During the progress of it he was divided between pity for the girl whom he loved and irritation at what seemed to him very like cynicism and heartlessness on her part. He had asserted that he understood her position; but he did not really understand it, and probably no one except the daughter of a thoroughly unscrupulous woman could have realised all its difficulties. Lady Florence had taken her departure before Peggy Rowley re-entered the room and said:

‘Well, are you convinced now?’

‘Convinced of what?’ asked Frank. ‘I am convinced that she is in her mother’s power for the present, if that is what you mean.’

‘Ah, that means a great deal. Perhaps you are also convinced

by this time that I gave you sound advice when I warned you against falling in love with poor Florry. You chose to do it, and now you have got to suffer for it. I don't pity you, and it wasn't for your sake that I disgraced myself by asking you here to-day. You'll get over it. Ask your cousin Douglas ; he will tell you that there are heaps of consolations open to a man in the prime of life—politics, cricket, hunting, what you please. Men can go in for a hundred things ; but women, say what they will, can only go in for one thing. And it's never worth their while to do that. Still I'm glad that Florry should have had the poor comfort of listening to your protestations, which I'm sure were sincere—for the time being.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

A BLOODLESS ENCOUNTER.

PEGGY ROWLEY was quite right in affirming that men have many other things to go in for besides making love and worrying themselves over the complications which are only too apt to arise out of a phase of experience through which it is the destiny of all mortals to pass at least once during their sojourn here below. Trite though the reflection may be, it is nevertheless as true as trite reflections always are, that the essential superiority of men over women consists chiefly in the power which the former possess and the latter lack of thinking of one thing at a time and to dismiss what they most care for from their minds while they are attending to matters of minor importance. It was a matter of minor importance to Douglas Colborne whether he became an Under-Secretary of State or not, whereas his wife's relations towards him and towards other men were—or, if they were not, he honestly believed that they were—matters of supreme importance to him. But the question of that possible Under-Secretaryship had to be considered, certain *pourparlers* had to be exchanged, daily business had to be transacted, social duties had to be performed ; and so it was that, after the Duchess of Brentford's entertainment, he had little leisure for speculating upon what the Italian who had been introduced to him on that occasion could have meant by conduct which had been decidedly provocative and almost insolent. What he said to himself when his memory and his curiosity did for a time busy themselves with that eccentric individual was that it is never

advisable to meet trouble half-way, and that, if the Marchese had anything more to say to him, the Marchese knew, at any rate, where to find him. An ardent lover or a jealous husband would have been less cool, perhaps ; but Douglas was not of that opinion. He had never wavered in his allegiance to his wife ; he was ready to receive her back at a moment's notice ; he had nothing to reproach himself with. But she had put it completely out of his power to take any step so far as she was concerned. It was for her, or for someone deputed by her, to make the next move ; and, all things considered, it seemed scarcely probable that the Marchese di Leonforte had been despatched to England as her deputy. After some days he came to the conclusion that the Countess's admirer—if indeed the man was her admirer—had not, after all, crossed the Channel with the amiable intention of treading upon his toes, and he was slightly surprised when, one morning, just as he was finishing his breakfast, his servant brought him a glazed card upon which was inscribed, beneath a coronet, the name and title of his potential foe. The gentleman, he was told, was waiting to hear whether Mr. Colborne would receive him, and Mr. Colborne at once replied : ‘ Oh, certainly ; ask him to come in.’

It was not in order to tread upon the toes of a man who was very much in his way that the Marchese de Leonforte had driven in a hansom to Clarges Street that morning. One must needs accept the inconveniences together with the conveniences of the epoch in which one lives, and Leonforte had become convinced, somewhat against his will, that he must forego the satisfaction of dealing summarily with the Countess Radna's husband. He had informed himself ; he had asked a few questions and had heard all that he wanted to hear, without having appeared inquisitive. He still thought that it would be very delightful to plunge a *fleuret de combat* into some part of Mr. Colborne's person which did not contain a vital organ ; he was still unable to comprehend how English people managed to settle their differences while declining to have recourse to sword or pistol, and he was still doubtful as to whether the Countess had not meant him to avenge her after that fashion ; but he had ascertained as a fact that Englishmen really and truly do not fight duels any more ; and what in the world is to be done with a man who will neither fight you nor be accounted disgraced for having refused to fight you ? The innocent Leonforte, after much meditation, thought that he knew what to do with Mr. Colborne. During the past few days he had

talked with men and he had talked with women, and his suspicions had received ample confirmation. It seemed to be evident and notorious that Mr. Colborne, if he were free, would marry Miss Rowley; and why should not Mr. Colborne be set free? It was provoking and humiliating to be driven to make terms with so despicable a fellow and to reward, instead of punishing, him for his infidelity; but there are no insuperable difficulties in the way of pardoning those whom one despises, and it had to be remembered that his emancipation was necessary for that of a far more worthy person. Therefore he followed his card into Douglas's presence with as courteous and conciliatory an air as he could induce his features to assume.

The two men had to shake hands. Each of them hesitated, before going through that ceremony, just long enough to convey an impression of reluctance to the other; but neither of them wanted to begin quarrelling without preliminaries, and Leonforte did not want to quarrel at all. Why should he, since it seemed that the customs of the country forbade him to quarrel in any rational or satisfactory manner? He did not take the arm-chair towards which he was motioned, but, seating himself upon a higher and less comfortable one, opened the proceedings by saying:

'You are, perhaps, surprised to receive a visit from me, sir?'

'Delighted,' answered Douglas, politely.

'I can only accept that assurance as a figure of speech. After what passed between us on the occasion of our previous meeting, it is impossible that my company can be a source of pleasure to you, Mr. Colborne; nor do I find any pleasure in forcing it upon you.'

Douglas stared and laughed a little. Leonforte's slow enunciation and stilted phraseology irritated him, and he hardly knew in what tone to respond. It would have given him a good deal of satisfaction to kick the man; but, that being out of the question, he kept his temper and remarked:

'I remember that, when we last met, you told me you had made my acquaintance against your will, and I believe I answered that I hadn't asked my cousin to introduce me to you—or something to that effect.'

The Marchese bowed gravely. 'Your memory is perfectly correct, sir,' replied he. 'You may also recollect that I mentioned my reason for not desiring to be personally acquainted with you, and that you were so obliging as to hand me your card.'

In Italy, in France—everywhere, I believe, except in this country, and perhaps in America—such an action could have had only one meaning, and I should have known what steps to take in consequence of it.'

The Marchese paused here and looked so bellicose that Douglas laughed again. 'Do you really mean to say,' asked the latter, 'that you have come here to challenge me to mortal combat? I suppose you do; though I can't for the life of me imagine why you should. Well, I'm afraid I can't accommodate you: there is no such thing as duelling in England nowadays.'

'I have already intimated,' returned the Italian, 'that I am aware of the strange condition of things which you describe. I will not disguise from you that, if you had been a Frenchman or an Italian, I should have had the honour of sending you my *témoins*, instead of calling upon you personally.'

'You are too kind. But why would you have done so, if I may take the liberty of inquiring?'

'It appears to me, sir, that the question is superfluous. If you had not been an Englishman, you would have considered yourself insulted—and you would have had a right to consider yourself insulted—by what I said to you.'

'I see. Only then it would have been my privilege to send a couple of friends to demand satisfaction from you, wouldn't it?'

Leonforte frowned and shrugged his shoulders. He had not come to Clarges Street for the purpose of quarrelling with Mr. Colborne; but he had not come for the purpose of being laughed at either, and he now perceived that he had made a little mistake by alluding to a duel which was not going to take place. He was, moreover, somewhat at a loss for words, having carefully rehearsed all his speeches in advance, and being unable to hit upon one which would fit in neatly at the present juncture. He, therefore, muttered an imprecation in his own language and followed it up by saying, in less correct English than he had hitherto employed:

'You do not hold yourself for insulted?—very good!—very well!—to me it is all equal. But, as a friend of the Countess Radna, I permit myself to tell you that you are treating her in a fashion intolerable!'

'Then,' answered Douglas, getting up and standing with his back towards the empty grate, 'you permit yourself a liberty which isn't permitted in this country, although duelling has been

done away with. I don't mind telling you frankly that I wish it hadn't been done away with, and that I should like nothing better than to be given a chance of punishing you for your impertinence ; but, as it is, I can't do that without making myself supremely ridiculous. For much the same reasons, I can't resent an affront offered to me in my own rooms otherwise than by requesting you to be so good as to leave them. I hope you won't take it into your head to fancy that I am afraid of you ; but if you choose to do so, you must ; I have no power to prove the contrary.'

Leonforte, who had also risen to his feet, was slightly mollified and slightly ashamed. After all, it was not the other man's fault that the absurd customs of his country forbade him to avenge an insult, and it is not very magnanimous to insult one who labours under such restrictions.

'Mr. Colborne,' said he, 'I have to offer you my excuses. I do not doubt your courage, and I was wrong to speak to you as I did, since I could say what I pleased without risking my skin. Unhappily, I cannot retract what I said, because it was true. You have cruelly injured a lady for whom I have an esteem and a respect of the most profound.'

Douglas, who had been thoroughly angry for a moment, was now half-angry, half-amused, and wholly puzzled. The Italian seemed to be an honest sort of individual ; but if he recognised the impossibility of fighting, and if he had not come to demand an explanation, what did the man want ? After a pause, he said : 'You can't suppose that I shall submit to be put upon my defence by you. May I ask whether you are here as my wife's representative ?'

'By no means ! I have not the smallest authority to speak on behalf of the Countess ; I speak only as one who greatly admires and pities that unfortunate lady, and I am here only to suggest to you, sir, that you should release her from bonds which you are evidently as anxious to break as she can be. You will say, perhaps, that the law does not allow you to do so. I believe that is the case ; but the Church is above the law, and I do not think it would be impossible to obtain a dissolution of your marriage from the Holy See. Not desiring to be offensive, I will not mention any lady's name, nor will I attempt to hold out inducements ; but it is a matter of common conversation that you would willingly replace the Countess Radna by a second wife, and I myself have observed——'

‘My good sir,’ interrupted Douglas, ‘you really are talking the most dreadful nonsense I ever heard a man talk in my life. Excuse my cutting you short; but you seem to be under a total misapprehension. In the first place, you are quite mistaken in imagining that the Holy See can annul a legal marriage; in the second place, I haven’t the remotest idea or intention of taking a second wife; and, in the third place, I certainly haven’t been guilty of any cruelty whatsoever towards the lady who remains my wife, although she has seen fit to separate herself from me. I don’t owe you any account of the circumstances; but, on the other hand, I have no particular objection to giving you one. Upon my honour as a gentleman, I don’t to this day know why my wife left me, unless it was because she had become tired of me. She didn’t like English country life, and I, being a Member of Parliament and having a small estate to look after, couldn’t consent to reside abroad. That was the ostensible reason for our parting, and I am not acquainted with any other, except that of which I told you just now.’

Leonforte gazed at his interlocutor and sighed. ‘I believe that you are speaking the truth, sir,’ he said at length.

‘Thank you; but if you will reflect for a moment, you will perceive that I could have had no conceivable motive for telling you a lie. I haven’t asked you any questions, and I don’t intend to ask you any. You may have had reasons of your own for wishing to bring about an impossible divorce——’

The Marchese threw up his right hand and shook his head.

‘Oh, I think you must have had reasons; but I dare say they were legitimate reasons enough, considering that you have so obviously been made the victim of some deception: anyhow, as I said before, I don’t care to inquire into them. But I hope you understand now that, instead of talking to a miscreant of romance, you are merely talking to an ordinary, commonplace Briton who, through no special fault of his own, has been placed in an awkward situation from which it is out of his power to extricate himself.’

‘Yes,’ answered Leonforte, smiling for the first time, ‘I think I can understand; and it may be that I have been deceived about you, though I do not believe that any one has wished to practise a deception upon me. But this situation which you find so awkward—you will not attempt, then, to extricate yourself from it by means of a divorce?’

‘Nobody, I suppose, would attempt what is manifestly im-

possible. Moreover, I don't wish to be divorced from my wife, although I gather from what you say that she wishes to be divorced from me. Hitherto I haven't interfered with her liberty, nor do I propose to do so; I am willing to grant her all the advantages that belong to a separation which was not of my choosing. I can't do more.'

'Ah,' exclaimed Leonforte half-involuntarily, 'you would not speak like that if you loved her!'

'Shouldn't I? It seems to me that I should; and I might fairly retort that she wouldn't have treated me as she has done if she had loved me. However, you may tell her from me, if you think it worth while, that I am as ready as I have been from the first to let bygones be bygones, and that I have never been untrue to her either by act or by wish. I am afraid no advice of mine is likely to be of service to you; still you might do worse than to profit by my experience. The Countess Radna will never care for any man long, because she will never be able to care much for him after she has satisfied her curiosity by finding out all that there is to be found out about him.'

These words of warning were forced from Douglas by a feeling of mortification which he was doing his best to subdue. He knew that they were not in very good taste; but he could not swallow them down, and they were evidently not without effect upon his visitor, who kept silence for a few instants before looking up and answering:

'I am obliged to you, Mr. Colborne; I think you are a gallant man, though your English fashions of behaviour are to me a little incomprehensible. You have divined what I could not have told you without being grossly insulting, and it appears that no man can insult another in this country. I hope you have divined that I also wish to conduct myself as a gallant man; but what can I say to you? The situation is more than awkward; it is—it is inconceivable!'

'It can't very well be that, since it exists. I have already told you that I am powerless to extricate myself from it in its present phase; but I may be able to extricate myself from it honourably when it enters upon a fresh one—as I presume that it will. Whether you will be able to extricate yourself from it honourably is another question. Perhaps you would do well to consider it while you have yet time.'

Leonforte made one of those expressive gestures which the

Latin races are wont to substitute for language. 'You are right,' he exclaimed—'you are entirely right! Yet it remains true that you do not love her. I will report this conversation to her scrupulously; I have not been commissioned by her to seek it, and I do not know how she will take my account of it. Personally, I am persuaded that I have had a false impression of you, sir; and, whatever may happen in the future, I shall always be at your orders. It is droll; but—it is like that! I can offer you no other satisfaction.'

Leonforte meant to be strictly honest, and Douglas gave him full credit for that excellent intention; but it is scarcely surprising that the Countess Radna's husband should have formed erroneous conclusions as to the position and privileges of the Countess Radna's avowed admirer. The former, when he had bowed his visitor out, was a good deal less calm than he appeared to be. It was all very fine for the Marchese to affirm that he held no commission; but he had obviously been informed that the Countess wished for a divorce from her husband. Well, it rested with her to obtain what she desired. 'She can hardly,' thought Douglas, with an angry laugh, 'expect me to go over to Paris in order to beat her, as a preliminary measure.'

Anyhow, he himself was blameless; he had nothing whatsoever to reproach himself with; nor was it his fault that he could take no step to facilitate her release. The only thing that worried him was that phrase of Leonforte's which rang persistently in his ears, 'You would not speak like that if you loved her!' Had he ceased to love her? If he had, so much the better; for it had been very clearly demonstrated that her love for him was a thing of the past. Nevertheless, his conscience was too sensitive to grant him a clean bill of indemnity, and it was not with political questions that he was preoccupied when the time came for him to walk down to Westminster.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DRAWING-ROOM DIPLOMACY.

FRANK INNES was one of those amiable mortals to whom it is always impossible to keep their own counsel. He thought too well of his fellow-creatures at large to believe that they could take no interest at all in affairs which nearly concerned him, and he thought so well of his cousin Douglas Colborne in particular that,

after the conversation with Lady Florence Carey which has been partially recorded in a previous chapter, it became a matter of imperative necessity for him to look up that perplexed politician and tell him all about it.

'I warned you of what was in store for you,' was Douglas's comment upon the narrative to which he had listened with patient attention; 'there never was, and never could have been, the shadow of a hope that those people would look twice at you.'

'Oh, yes; I know,' returned Frank somewhat impatiently; 'I didn't expect them to welcome me with blessings and promises of liberal settlements. But, for all that, I don't see why I should despair yet awhile. You yourself, the last time that I spoke to you, seemed to admit that it was for Lady Florence to say the last word.'

'Well; she has said it, hasn't she?'

'In a way she has; but of course she acted under compulsion. She wouldn't have consented to meet me at Miss Rowley's if she had really and finally made up her mind to throw me over; and, what's more, I don't believe that, if she had, Miss Rowley would have asked her to meet me.'

'That only shows that Miss Rowley is a very injudicious friend.'

'You ought to be the last person to say so; for she has been a tolerably judicious friend to you, by all accounts. You must know that she has. I'm sure you do know it, and I'm sure you won't be so pig-headed as to refuse office after all the efforts that she has made to smooth down the bigwigs for you.'

'Upon my word, I didn't know that she had made any efforts on my behalf,' answered Douglas. 'If it is true that she has, I am very grateful to her, and very sorry that she should have wasted her time in that way. The question of my accepting or refusing office—supposing that it should be offered to me—is a perfectly simple one. It depends upon a few straightforward conditions, which can't be affected one way or the other by drawing-room diplomacy.'

'Oh, I expect they can. Drawing-room diplomacy, as you call it, counts for something, though I suppose you won't allow that it does, and Miss Rowley is a good friend of yours, whether you'll allow it or whether you won't. She is just as anxious as I am, for instance, that you should come to an understanding with the Countess—or, at least, that you should come to the end of a misunderstanding.'

‘You are both of you very kind. Did Miss Rowley mention her anxiety upon the subject to you?’

‘Not in so many words; the truth is that she and I have had other things to talk about of late. But I haven’t the slightest doubt as to her opinions and wishes, and you may depend upon it that she won’t let a chance slip of bringing together two people who ask nothing better than to be brought together again. By the way, have you seen that Italian chap since the evening when I introduced him to you?’

‘Yes; he did me the honour to call upon me, and what he said certainly did not convey to me the idea that my wife was eager for a reconciliation. But aren’t we rather wandering from the point? The point, I presume, is that Lady Florence would be willing to marry you if such an arrangement were at all practicable; but that she doesn’t at present see how it could be made practicable.’

‘Of course that’s the point, so far as I am concerned; and, as I said before, I think it’s a strong enough point to keep me from despairing. Why shouldn’t I make a pot of money upon the stage and the platform? And why shouldn’t she wait until I have made it?’

‘Nothing is more improbable than that she will wait or be allowed to wait; I can’t pretend to judge what your chances of making a pot of money are. Have you written to your father?’

‘Rather!—and had the answer that I knew I should get. He has a very pretty literary style when he is out of temper, as he is on most days of the week, and he says he hopes I shall have the decency to change my name before I exhibit myself in public as a mountebank. I’ve no doubt I shall be able to oblige him in that respect, and, as I’m independent of him, I needn’t quarrel with him for calling me a mountebank. Your sanction is a good deal more important to me than his—yours and Miss Rowley’s. You two have befriended me; you have some claim upon my obedience; and I’m very glad to think that neither of you has positively forbidden me to make my fortune in the only way that is open to me.’

‘I shouldn’t have thought that Miss Rowley had any special claim upon your obedience,’ said Douglas, who was somewhat irritated, without quite knowing why, by the prominent part which had been assigned to that lady in the above dialogue. ‘For my own part, I have no pretension to make you obey me and no

expectation that you would do so, if I were foolish enough to crack the whip over your head. Perhaps, though, I may take the liberty of remarking that it is scarcely worth while to quarrel with your father and throw up your profession upon the off-chance that Lady Florence Carey will be so romantic as to wait for you and insist upon marrying you three or four years hence. Even if she were—and the chances are fully a thousand to one against it—how can you tell that you will want to marry her three or four years hence? In all probability you will want very much to marry somebody else by that time. I suppose you won't believe it; but it is nevertheless the fact that all human beings are inconstant, and that women are far more inconstant than men.'

Frank replied by throwing himself back in his chair and laughing aloud. 'I beg your pardon, old chap,' said he, as soon as he had overcome his hilarity; 'but it is better to laugh at you than to swear at you, and one can't help doing the one or the other when you say things which you are the last man in the world to take for facts. I know exactly what it is: that Italian beggar has put your back up, and you're in an infernal rage with women in general. You'll allow them some few virtues as soon as you find out that the Countess is only waiting for you to advance a step to meet her. As for me, I'm not going to despise a girl who has owned that she loves me until she forces me to despise her; and I'm not going to quarrel with my father either. I can't help it if he chooses to quarrel with me, can I?'

Douglas had nothing to add to the remonstrances which he had already felt bound to formulate, nor did he deem it consistent with self-respect to mention all the reasons that he had for holding a low opinion of women at large and of his own wife especially. He thought, however, that Peggy Rowley might have known better than to encourage a young idiot in his idiocy, and he resolved to tell her what he thought in plain words the very next time that he met her. He was entitled to treat her as a friend—not to call her a slightly officious friend—and one of the most essential privileges which belong to friendship is that of free speech.

It so happened that he encountered her, the same evening, at a crowded official reception, and he would have attacked her at once had she not eagerly introduced another subject before he had time to open his lips.

'Am I to congratulate you?' she asked. 'I do hope so; because, if I am not, I shall be driven to execrate you. I tell you

candidly that it is more than I ventured to expect for you, and most people would tell you that it is more than you have earned.'

'I haven't the most distant idea of what you are talking about,' answered Douglas.

'Oh, nonsense! You mean, I suppose, that all the formalities haven't been gone through yet; but you are certainly aware that a new Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs has to be appointed, and that you will be that new Under-Secretary, unless you are utterly blind to your own interests.'

'No; I have heard nothing more than rumours. I saw several names mentioned in the evening papers; but mine was not among them.'

'Naturally it wasn't; the newspapers invariably name the wrong man, and if, by any chance, they were to hit upon the right one, it would tell against him. I thought you would have had a letter before now; but, as you haven't, I venture to assure you upon my own responsibility that you are safe to get one. I don't say that you have no enemies in high places; but you have friends as well, and your friends have carried the day this time.'

'Does that mean that I am blessed with unofficial partisans, and that you are the most influential of them?'

'It means that I have done my little best: you might have counted upon me to do that. At the same time, you know as well as I do that promotion doesn't go by favour in these days. You were certain to get something: all one could do was to plead for the best thing going; and I do modestly flatter myself that I have been of some small service to you in that way.'

The truth was that Miss Rowley had exerted herself to the utmost, and was not a little proud of what she had achieved; so that she felt proportionately snubbed when the recipient of her benefits replied: 'It is most kind of you to have interested yourself for me; but I hope you won't think me very ungrateful for saying that I would rather not be hoisted into office upon anybody's shoulders. I don't so very much care about office; but if I am to have it, I should prefer to think that I had won it upon my own merits. However, I haven't been asked to take it yet.'

Peggy had an almost perfect temper; but this was a little more than she could bear with equanimity. She said:

'I don't know what you would have, and what's more, I don't believe you know either. I apologise for having interfered; I won't offend in that way a second time. Luckily, there is no

harm done ; because it is still open to you to reject advances with which you won't be troubled again. If you are not satisfied with being shunted on to a siding where you will have ample leisure to grow wise and grey before anybody comes to disturb you, all I can say is that you will have shown yourself rather hard to please.'

Douglas tried to look penitent, and, being a wretched hand at dissimulation, failed signally. It was with an irrepressible smile upon his lips that he rejoined : ' Ah, you do think me ungrateful ! I was afraid you would, and I am very sorry for it. All the same, I am not ungrateful, and most likely I shan't request the Ministry to shunt me, though I shan't break my heart if they do. How am I to explain myself to you without seeming rude ? I am immensely obliged to you ; but—well, life isn't all politics, you see.'

' Oh, I am not quite so blind as to be unable to see that ; but my sight really isn't keen enough to discern your motives for entering upon a political career and then declining to play the game. Perhaps, though, you do mean to play the game, and it is only my humble intervention that you wish to resent. If so, I can but assure you once more that you shall not have any cause to complain of it in future.'

It may be true that there is something not altogether displeasing to us in the misfortunes of our best friends ; but one hopes that it is untrue. What we can all concede with less reluctance is that there is occasionally something rather pleasing to us in their anger ; and Douglas was not ashamed of having irritated a lady who had goodnaturedly irritated and humiliated him many and many a time. He wanted her to understand that he stood in no need of patronage, and it looked as if he had succeeded in bringing that conviction home to her.

' I don't think I have broken the rules of the game up to now,' he remarked, ' and I trust that I shall continue to pay due respect to them. Only the game and its rules are not of supreme consequence to me. I have tried my luck at other games and have lost. Such experiences breed a philosophic calm and indifference to defeat. The sun will go on rising and setting as usual, whether I am selected or whether I am shunted.'

Miss Rowley turned the tables upon him by recovering her good humour and declaring that she had never in her life heard philosophic indifference proclaimed with such obvious insincerity.

' When one really doesn't care,' she added, ' one doesn't take the trouble to assert how little one cares in such admirably chosen

language. You and I are old friends ; so we needn't try to humbug one another. Your complaint is easily enough discovered by an old friend : it isn't philosophy and it isn't indifference ; it's nothing in the world but that petulance which prompts a small boy to smack the nearest person to him in the face. I confess that I don't like being smacked in the face, and I confess that for a minute or two I was very much inclined to smack you back ; but I feel better now and I forgive you. You also look as if you felt better by this time, and I dare say you are enough of a calm philosopher to take the good things sent you by the Gods, *en attendant mieux*. Better things will come in due course. They have come as far as Paris, I hear, and they will step across the Channel, if only you will have the patience to refrain from beckoning to them.'

Douglas bit his lips and shook his head. It vexed him to be called petulant, because he was conscious of a certain degree of petulance ; but he was quite sure that Peggy was mistaken as to its cause. Since, however, he himself was unable to account for it satisfactorily, he thought it best to ignore her allusion.

'I am sorry if I spoke snappishly,' said he. 'I didn't mean to be snappish ; but the fact is that one's old friends sometimes do rather provoking and incomprehensible things. What possible object can you have in encouraging this foolish affair between Frank Innes and Lady Florence Carey ? You can't, surely, think that you are showing the boy any kindness by encouraging him !'

'If it comes to that, you have no business to think that you are showing him any kindness by encouraging him to believe that he will be your heir. Set me down as a meddling busybody, if you like ; I shall endeavour to survive your censure. It is true that up to the present time I have done all I could to discourage your cousin ; but I don't promise to go on discouraging him. Why shouldn't he have his little romance, like the rest of us ? And why shouldn't Florry have hers ? Say what you will, they may marry eventually, if they are steadfast enough, in spite of you and me and Lady Burcote and all the dictates of common sense. Such things have happened before now.'

'Not very often, have they ?'

'Oh dear, yes, I should think so—heaps of times ! But you are like all men ; you think that the world was created only for you, and that everybody's love-affairs, except your own, are sheer foolishness. Here comes the Prime Minister, with a benevolent

look in his eye which is evidently meant to catch yours. Go and hear what he has to say to you, and don't be as cheeky to him as you have been to me, or he will make short work of you. Seriously, and as my last word, you ought not to be too hard upon me if I *am* a busybody. What else is there left for a lone, lorn woman to be? And I haven't injured either you or your cousin yet by my intermeddling.'

Peggy disappeared into the throng, and the Prime Minister, who, it seemed, really did wish to speak to Mr. Colborne, took her place. The great man was very kind and very complimentary; Douglas would have had no excuse for being cheeky to him, even if he had wished to manifest his independence after that unwise fashion; nor did he feel that he had any excuse for refusing the post of responsibility which was presently submitted to him for acceptance or rejection. He was told candidly that his support in the House of Commons was considered worth the high price offered for it; sundry observations which he deemed it incumbent upon him to make were listened to attentively and answered in a manner which satisfied him, and when he went away, he could not help being conscious that he was a much bigger personage than he had been earlier in the evening.

Some men, of course, are far more covetous of public honours and distinctions than others; but only a very few positively dislike them, and Douglas Colborne did not belong to that select band. Although success in public life could not compensate him for the total failure which he felt that he had made of his private life, it was at least of some value as a consolation. Only he still wished that such success as had fallen to his share had not been brought about by the exertions of Peggy Rowley. He said to himself that she was indeed a true friend, and that he was very fond of her, but that it was a little absurd on her part to patronise him, to laugh at him for what she was pleased to call his petulance, and to treat him as though she had been so very much older and wiser than he was. Then he remembered what Leonforte had somewhat impertinently said, and recalled certain remarks quite as impertinent which had been made by other people and had reached his ears. It really seemed a pity that Miss Spofforth, or somebody else who possessed experience and influence, should not breathe a word of warning in the proper quarter, and remind Peggy that she was neither aged enough nor ugly enough to despise the purveyors of scandal. For a moment



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MARCH 1893.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TRYING THE PISTOL.

THERESA had been speaking, whilst engaged in collecting the coral beads, kneeling on the carpet. When she saw the girl fling herself down, she went to her, on her knees, and seated herself beside her. The corals she had collected were in one palm. She laid the other hand on the ruddy golden head that was rocking and tossing, and gently stroked it.

'Esther, my dear, you must be reasonable. You love the sun, but if you climbed into heaven to it, you would be burnt in its fire. You love the moon, but if you were to drag it down to your little hut, its rays would be quenched, it would turn black as a cinder in your hands. You know that you never, never, never can be Justinian's wife.'

The girl, speaking into the pile of the carpet through her fingers, said, 'I know that. Didn't I join their hands in the Tolmaen?'

'I do not understand you, Esther.'

'Didn't I take him and make him hold Miss Alice's hand through the holed stone, and that's a surer marriage than any person can bind. I did it—I—and what I did I cannot undo.'

'I do not understand about that,' said Theresa, raising her hand for a moment from the girl's head, that had ceased its rocking motion under the gentle pressure. 'I know nothing

about this holed stone, my dear, but of this I am very sure, that you and Justinian are too wide apart ever with honour, and without shame and misery, to be nearer each other than you are now. So try to be a sensible girl, and conquer this feeling in your heart that can only make you wretched, and which, if not driven away, may be the occasion of such disgrace to Justinian as will destroy his prospects in life.'

'She at the Cornish Chough said that.' Esther raised her head and turned it.

'And she, whoever she was, said what is true. Will you listen patiently to me, child?'

'Yes, I'll try.'

Esther lifted herself on one arm, and turned to Theresa.

'Why did you take your hand off me? Are you angry?'

'No, indeed I am not.'

The evening light, shining through the window that commanded the Western sky, fell over the girl. The whole sky was in flame above the set sun, and in the flame were bars of cloud as pure gold gleaming with intense brilliancy. The amber glare from the sky pouring in at the window suffused the girl on the floor. In her tossing, her hair had become untied; it fell in a shining flood over her shoulder, and the arm that stayed her up.

Theresa put out her hand and drew the young head to her and laid it on her lap.

'There, my dear, will that please you? How hot your head is

'Go on,' said Esther, 'say what you will.'

'I have not much to say,' continued Theresa, 'but what I say I am sure, if you have—and I know you have it—an honest and true heart—I am sure you say to yourself in your own heart. You love Justinian, and he likes you after a fashion. So do I, I like you, I like you very much. So does Alice, so must all who come to know you.'

'You are wrong—folks hate me.'

'Surely not hate you.'

'They don't like me. No mothers 'll let their children come with me. No maids 'll ever play wi' me. I've no friends.'

'They do not understand you. You are a little wild for them. But that is not what I am speaking about. What I was about to say was this, Did you ever hear the story of the man who married a cat?'

'A cat! No.'

'He had a beautiful tabby, and she was a capital mouser. She was such a beautiful puss, with such white soft fur on her paws, and purred so sweetly, that the man asked Juno to turn her into a woman.'

'Who's Juno?'

'Well, we will say a wise woman.'

'Go on. Did she do it?'

'Yes.'

'I know,' said Esther musingly, 'that wise women theirselves turn o' night times when they likes into hares. There was one out Altarnun way. Her went about all over the country to night-times, after dimmets (twilight). But one night her got caught i' Squire Rodd's trap—set by the keeper. And next morning what did he find in his trap but a woman's hand. And he went round axing what she folks was ill. And when he came to Genefer Carn-due's cottage, her ou'd man—silly fool—let out as her were i' bed wi' a bad arm. Then the keeper he forced his way upstairs, and found the ou'd woman i' bed, and he pu'd down the clothes, and sure enough, her had lost a hand.'

'You are interrupting my story.'

'Sure and sartain I was. There, go on, and put your hand over my lips to make me hou'd my tongue.'

'Well, Esther, so this wise woman, Juno, she did what she was asked. She turned the cat into a beautiful young wife. The man was very pleased, and he had the table spread for a great wedding feast, and he invited all his friends to it, to see what a lovely wife he had. Well, they came and made merry, and praised her very highly. All went on very well till a mouse ran through the room. Then up sprang the lady, and the tablecloth caught in her dress, and she jumped away and ran after the mouse, pulling the table-cloth and all the glasses and plates, and dishes and bottles, and pies and cakes, off the table in a smash and confusion on the floor. But she did not care; she had caught and was eating the mouse.'

'Oh, jimmery-chry!' Esther burst out laughing; then slowly rose to her knees and stood up.

'Yes,' she said, 'I reckon it's a right sort o' a tale for me, and I knows it is so. There, gi'e me my corals, I'll string them again, and I promise you I'll put the thoughts of him out o' my heart so much as I can. I've been silly, I know. I wouldn't go after a mouse—no! But if I were at a great feast, with grand

silver and goold plates, and knives and forks, and glass and gran' folks, ladies and gentles, like as there in them picturs on the stairs, and talkin' about I don't know what, and if I was to hear a horniwick (plover) whistle outside o' the winder, I'd up—I know—just like that lady, and away I'd go out o' the winder and away after the horniwick, and to the moors and over Trewortha—and never come back there no more.'

'That is a brave and good girl. I thought you would do what is right, and I am not deceived.'

Esther turned sharply and looked with brightened face into Theresa's eyes and smiled, two deep dimples forming at the corners of her mouth. Then she caught up Theresa's hand and kissed it passionately.

'Now,' said she, 'show me the Bungalow, as they ca' it, wi' all them queer things inside as I've heard tell on, that the Captain made.'

'I will cheerfully show you what is there. But some of the contrivances no longer work, or I do not understand how to wind them up, and some have been removed.'

The girl fastened up her hair, and followed her guide down the great staircase. On the landing they passed a maid-servant, who looked with surprise and disgust at the half-savage girl, the granddaughter of the White Witch, and she stood well back against the wall, not so much out of deference to her mistress as to avoid the touch of the coarse clothes of Esther as she brushed by. In the hall was the footman, and he also stood aside and stared at the girl with insolence and disdain. What right had she from off the moors to be in the house? What could Mrs. Curgenven mean by letting her in, by taking her upstairs? There were queer tales about the mistress—that she'd been a sort of a governess, or goodness knew what. John Thomas could believe anything of her, now that she so far forgot herself as to associate with, and bring up the great staircase, such a creature as Esther Morideg. Birds of a feather fly together. You may know a person by the company he or she keeps. Lor! what be the world a coming to? John Thomas was expected to go up and down the backstairs, and if the backstairs was good enough for him, it was a great deal too good for wild creatures off the moor.

Esther was quite conscious of the impression she wrought on the two servants, and she breathed freer when she was outside the house. Theresa turned back to speak to the footman, and require

refreshments to be brought into the Bungalow, where she considered Esther would be more disposed to eat than in the house.

In the Bungalow, Theresa amused the girl with what pieces of mechanism could be got to act, and then brought her into the smoking-room, whither she had ordered a tray with rabbit-pie, tart, and some cider to be brought.

Here she seated herself, and allowed Esther to look at the weapons on the wall, the whips, spurs, fishing-rods, and spoils of the chase.

'Can you shoot?' asked the girl, turning to Theresa, who shook her head with a smile in response.

'But I can,' said Esther. 'My granfer he's brave wi' his gun, and I reckon I can bring down a woodcock as well as he. But thickey little things—they be pisterns (pistols) I s'pose. I never shot wi' such as they.'

She took down a pistol, cocked it, and let down the hammer cautiously. She then took the ramrod—it was an old-fashioned pistol, not a breechloader—and tried whether the instrument was loaded. Satisfied that it was not, she turned again to Theresa, and in a coaxing tone said, 'Now do 'y then let me have a shot wi' she and try what her be like.'

'So long as you do no mischief, I do not object.'

'Where be the bullets?' asked the girl. She had found the gunpowder case and had run a charge into the barrel.

Theresa opened a drawer, where were bullets, and wads, and caps; also in compartments the cartridges of various sizes for breechloaders.

The girl at once fitted a bullet and put on a cap. Then she threw open the window.

'Now, what shall I have a shot at?' she asked, looking out into the park. 'Hish! For sartain there be a hoodwall (woodpecker) running up thickey oak tree. Do'y' see'n? Yonder. I wonder if I can hit'n.'

The girl raised the pistol and fired.

The bird flew away.

'I missed'n,' said Esther. 'There, now, if it had been granfer's ou'd gun I'd not ha' done that. Or, by golly! if it had been Lawyer Physic standin' there, I dare take my oath I'd ha' shot'n.'

In the door, aghast, stood the footman with the tray.

Theresa made a sign to him to place the tray on the table by the window.

'Now, Esther, here is something better for you to do than shoot hoodwalls.'

'I did'n shoot'n,' said the girl; 'for one, I pitied the poor birt for the other, I did'n understand a little pistern.'

She was loading again.

'There,' said she, 'now you try. Have a shot and see if you can do better nor me.'

'No, thank you, Esther. I am quite sure I would fail more completely than yourself. Come now, sit and eat and drink.'

'When you're by yourself,' said the girl, 'try; in a time or two it will come. It would wi' me if I had thickey pistern to practise wi'. There, I'll put'n back i' her place. Mind now, her's loaden. You can amuse yourself wi' she when you like, and mebbe make a better shot nor I. Or,' she took down the pistol again, 'might I have a shot at the footman there?'

John Thomas fled out of the smoking-room, ran back to the house and to the servants' hall, as fast as his stockinged legs could carry him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A NEW PROPOSAL.

No ladies called on the new Mrs. Curgenven. Gentlemen came to show courtesy to the squire, and clumsily apologised for their wives. One had a bad cold; another was visiting friends in town; the horses of several were indisposed; bereavement held others at home.

The rumour had circulated, whence and by whom started none could say, that the new Mrs. Curgenven was of doubtful character. It was asserted that she had been a ballet-dancer. How the ladies who made this assertion came to hold that opinion is not easily explained, as none of them knew anything whatever about Theresa. Moreover, such of their husbands as had, had protested that she was a perfect lady, of very charming manners and engaging appearance. Perhaps it was this fact that went against her. All the married ladies held as tenaciously as they did to the Athanasian Creed, that their husbands were easily deluded by pleasant features and a little flattery. Not one would allow that her husband had discernment and good taste except in that spasmodic moment when he made the choice of herself. The more the

gentlemen expatiated on the amiable manners, the handsome face, the graceful courtesy of Mrs. Curgenven, the more enrooted became the conviction in the bosoms of their ladies that she was a designing and unprincipled woman. That she was in bad form they concluded because she had succeeded and displaced Mrs. Curgenven the dowager. Jane was everything that society could desire: she was a woman of irreproachable morals, of the most formed manners in the most approved mould. She was a woman of sound sense and clear understanding. She was a woman of whom everything was known, from her birth till her bereavement. In every stage of life she had behaved well. She had been excellent as a hostess, admirable as a manageress of bazaars and charities; she had never said a word that was lacking in good feeling, never done an act that was tactless. In her house, as wife, mother, mistress, she was unapproachable. The praises of Mrs. Jane Curgenven were sung on all sides over every breakfast and dinner table; she was danced before the eyes of sleepy husbands in curtain lectures, she was held up in the schoolroom to young girls entering on life to be admired and striven after as a pattern, and everywhere and always the laudation of Mrs. Lambert carried with it the sometimes tacit, more often outspoken condemnation of Mrs. Percival. The very fact that there were two Mrs. Curgenvens of Curgenven forced them into comparison with one another; and when one Mrs. Curgenven had the advantage of being a parson's daughter, of having been known for many years to all the aristocracy of the neighbourhood, and bugged to its bosom, whereas the other Mrs. Curgenven had dropped suddenly from the sky, or come up from the other place, and nothing was known either of her origin or of her acquaintances; then, naturally enough, all the favour rolled into the scale of Jane, and none was available to weight that of Theresa.

The latter was fully aware how matters stood. She had waited in curiosity and hope for a week or two expecting visitors, but as no ladies came, the consciousness was forced upon her that society had pronounced against her.

Percival was impatient and angry. He could not bear in silence the slight cast on his wife. He stormed and grumbled; he fretted and found fault. He rushed off to the rectory to demand an explanation from Jane, but Jane declined to give him any. He denounced her as having set the neighbours against his wife. She repudiated the charge with indignation

and with justice. She had not said a word against Theresa. When neighbours had asked questions relative to the new squiress, or turned the conversation to her in Jane's presence, she had maintained the strictest silence; she had refused to be drawn to express an opinion concerning Percival's wife.

What was to be done?

Percival vowed he would leave Curgenven next winter and go to Italy, the Riviera, anywhere to be out of the ostracism that had fallen on his wife, and through her on him. He could not go to dinner parties to which she was not invited. He could not invite neighbours to his table, knowing that his invitations would be accepted by gentlemen only.

Yet it must be allowed that those gentlemen who did come to Curgenven tried their best, by deference and kindly civility to Mrs. Curgenven, to make up to her for the abstention of their wives; but they could not ask her to their houses, and all their efforts to persuade their womankind to call on Mrs. Curgenven only deepened and intensified their mistrust of her.

The servants noticed that there were no lady callers, and commented on it. They began to entertain doubts as to the respectability of their mistress, to form romances concerning her early life, when she had been a stage-player, as they said. The villagers talked, they eyed the new squiress with suspicion, but waited to see whether she was liberally disposed before deciding finally as to her claim to be a lady.

Theresa offered the rector to take a class in the Sunday-school. He passed his fingers through his white whiskers, and with many polite and unctuous speeches declined her services. There really was not a class that was not provided with a teacher. It would positively be the imposition of too heavy a task upon her.

Theresa was not one who cared for society. She lived much wrapped up in herself, and was happy to have books to read, beautiful objects about her, and a husband whose whims and pleasures she might consult. But the isolation in which she was placed wounded her; it grieved her specially because it annoyed Percival, and debarred him from taking his proper place in county society.

Theresa was in the Bungalow smoking-room thinking of these things when Physic entered.

'Glad to find you here, madam—and alone,' said he.

'Mr. Curgenven is out. I presume it is he whom you wish to see.'

'I am come on business.'

'As I said, he is not at home.'

'Precisely, but my business is with yourself.'

'Indeed!'

'You were so good as to furnish me with promptitude the sum I had demanded. For that I am obliged. Circumstances have occurred, over which I have no control, that place me in extreme pecuniary difficulties, and oblige me immediately to find a sum of money that I am unable unassisted to raise.'

'I quite understand to what this leads,' said Theresa haughtily. 'Because you have been able to wring from me three hundred pounds, you are resolved to wring some more.'

'It is a case of necessity.'

'It is a case of the horse-leech,' retorted Theresa. 'You will not let go till you have taken all you can.'

'When a man is driven to his wits' ends for money——'

'He loses all scruple, that is, supposing he had any scruples to lose.'

'You put things in a very harsh light.'

'The case stands thus,' said Theresa, her angry blood swelling her veins. 'You have determined to get from me all you can at the risk of causing misery to me by estranging my husband from me. Do your worst. You shall have no more.'

'I do not understand you.'

'I spoke plainly enough. I will not be tortured thus. It was to me inexpressibly painful to extort from Mr. Curgenven the sum you required. I did it, but I will not do it again.'

'Very well,' said Physic. 'Then you know the consequences. I shall produce the will.'

'As you like. But I do not believe you will do it. What have you to gain? Now you are agent for this estate, not without some advantage to yourself. Do you suppose you will retain the agency when it passes to Mrs. Jane Curgenven? If what I hear be true, she was constantly urging Captain Curgenven to take it from you and give it to the Smiths, who are said to be worthy and upright men. When the estate is hers, will she retain you as her factotum? I doubt it. So do you. If you prove that will, you lose what is worth something not inconsiderable. For that reason you will not do it.'

Physic looked at Theresa with a blank expression, but speedily recovered himself.

‘What is this agency worth that I should care for it? If I tell Mrs. Jane that I can give her the estate and house, I can make it a proviso that I am kept in my place, and that I receive some consideration for my services in helping her into her own.’

‘No, you will not. She will not thank you to be proclaimed no wife of Captain Curgenven, and her child to be illegitimate. She will owe you a grudge and not a debt.’

‘We shall see.’

‘Yes, we shall see. If this is all you have to say to me, you may go.’

‘And you will drive me to use the will?’

‘You will not use it. You are too well aware of your own interest to do so. I tell you that I had rather be in poverty again than endure the torture to which you subject me, and the risk of forfeiting my husband’s love.’

‘Come, come, do not be so hot!’ said Physic, assuming a conciliatory tone. ‘You know that we are old friends.’

‘Indeed! I know nothing of the kind.’

‘Some consideration is due to me as an old admirer.’

Theresa pointed to the door. ‘Leave me. Do your worst.’

‘I will not go. I will not leave you in anger against me. Upon my soul, I do not desire to cause you annoyance. I would give you back the will most readily if I could afford it. I do not wish to drive you out of Curgenven. I do not wish to see Mrs. Jane come in, with her nose in the air. I ask but a reasonable thing. Here you are in possession of a fine estate worth four thousand a year, and, as you know very well, you hold it only because I do not produce a certain document. That document you put into my hand and you read what was written on it. I was empowered to use it or suppress it, as I saw fit.’

‘I do not suppose that this had any legal authority, and that you are really justified in retaining it.’

‘I am the best judge of that. Suffice it, between you and me, that you are mistress of Curgenven because I use the right given me by the writer of that paper. It stands to common sense that I should be considered for what I have done. I have done you a vast favour—worth four thousand a year—and now that I am in dire need for money I may with fairness ask you to let me have a little help.’

‘A little help! You have had three hundred pounds.’

‘What is three hundred to four thousand a year for, say, ten

years? Four thousand for ten years is forty thousand pounds, and you offer me three hundred! I spit at the offer. You would give me a dog's pay for my services. I will be treated like a man.'

'Then do your worst, Mr. Physic. We shall know what to expect.'

'Beggary, utter beggary.'

'Not beggary—poverty, perhaps.'

'Poverty most assuredly. And then—how will Mr. Percival find himself in poverty? You know that there is no work in him, no stability. He never earned an honest penny in his life. He can sponge—that is all he can do.'

'If we come to poverty we shall have to shape ourselves to our new quarters. That will be our concern. Tell me, once for all, what your demand is, so that this will may be delivered into my hands—into my hands, which in an inconsiderate moment, in this room, confided it to you.'

'A thousand pounds.'

'That is to say, seven hundred in addition to the three hundred you have received.'

'Oh dear no! It is dirt cheap at thirteen hundred.'

'A thousand stars out of the sky you might as well demand. I neither will ask my husband for the sum, nor, did I ask it, would he give it, not knowing the purpose for which it was given.'

'Let us understand each other,' said Physic coolly. 'You do not want to be further annoyed by me. Very good. A thousand pounds will place you in such a position that my power to annoy you is gone. I do not desire to turn you and your husband out of Curgenven, but I am not disposed to surrender my hold over you for any sum less than a thousand pounds. I should be a fool if I did.'

'I tell you for once and all, a thousand pounds is impossible. Do you suppose that my husband would sign me a cheque for that sum without knowing what I would do with it? I had trouble enough getting him to give me a cheque for three hundred.'

'I am well aware of that. But I know also that he has a Bolivian bond for a thousand. Three hundred and that would serve my purpose; it is about the only security he has.'

'What! you would have me rob him?'

‘No robbery at all. It is securing Curgenven and four thousand per annum to him. A very small sacrifice indeed. If you deny me what I want, then indeed you rob him of a fine property, a good income, and an enviable position. If he loses all this, you do it, you despoil him of everything rather than relieve my immediate necessity by handing over to me this trumpery bond.’

‘He keeps all his papers locked.’

‘But you know where is the key.’

‘I will not do it. Nothing in the world will induce me to it. I cannot—will not—rob my dear husband.’

‘Then I offer you another alternative.’

‘What is that?’ Theresa buried her face in her hands.

‘There are family jewels, heirlooms, of very considerable value; in fact, worth more than a thousand pounds. These, I presume, are in your keeping. Let me have them. I do not propose to get rid of them, but to raise on them the sum I require; and I leave it to you to get them back by the gradual extinction of the sum raised upon them.’

‘Now you propose that I should rob the family.’

‘What family? The dead Curgenvens in the ancestral vault, in the family silo? or the Curgenvens that are yet to come? Who will know if these jewels are in other hands for a while? Do you see so much company? go out to so many grand balls, where you would be expected to wear the jewels? Trust me, they may sleep in their cases so long as you are Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven. The county folk don’t like you, they will have nothing to say to the adventuress—the soubrette of the San Francisco Theatre. No—the drive may be grass-grown for all it is needed for the carriages of the squirearchy of the neighbourhood. You may dismiss the gatekeepers at the lodge, they will not be called on to open to any. The neighbourhood has placed you under an interdict, and as you are under an interdict you will not be required to wear jewelry. If the jewels be away from Curgenven, no one will be the wiser save yourself and me. What does Mr. Curgenven care about these gewgaws? In ten years, by a payment of a hundred and fifty per annum, I dare say you may be able to get them all back into your hands again. Meantime Curgenven is assured to your husband and to you. I leave you a week to turn this proposal over in your mind. Let me see—this day week—where shall we meet? not anywhere near the house. Say at Tolmenna—on the moor, where we can make sure

none will be looking and listening. If you bring the jewels, I will bring the will, and we shall effect an exchange. Till this day week—and then—at Tolmenna.'

CHAPTER XL.

OLD AND NEW QUARTERS.

'GET on your hat, Alice. I am going to carry you off.'

'Where to, Justinian?'

'It is too bad; you have not been to the house for an age. I run in here like a tame cat, and you never come to us. By the way, Aunt Jane, you have not been there either.'

'No, Justinian. You must remember my feelings. It would be most painful for me to go there, where I have spent such happy years.'

'But, Aunt Jane, you do not know my stepmother.'

'Oh—I do,' in a chilling tone.

'Alice does not. It is too bad that here she should be so close to the house, and not have been in to make her acquaintance. The stepmother is not a bad sort of person at all—she's rather jolly, in fact, and I don't blame the governor. So now, Alice, come and be introduced, and make your courtesy.'

'Oh—I—I think Alice has a music-lesson,' said Mrs. Jane.

'No, mamma. Wednesday is my day.'

'But practice, dear. You cannot expect to get on, and it is not fair to your master, who comes out from Liskeard, nor to me, who have to pay half-a-guinea for your lesson, if you do not work for it in preparation.'

'But, mamma, I can prepare at another time.'

Mrs. Curgenven frowned, and slightly shook her head, as a private notice to her daughter not to combat her reasons.

'Besides,' said that lady, 'there are some gathers out in her dress.'

'Oh, that is nothing, aunt. Alice can change her frock.'

'It is not that only; there are various reasons.'

'But what are they?' persisted Justinian. 'It seems to me that Alice is in duty bound to pay her respects to my stepmother. It seems so queer that she should not come to our house and get acquainted with her. I am quite sure Alice will like her, she is such a lady—so true a lady.'

'You are an excellent judge, no doubt,' said Mrs. Curgenven, throwing up her head.

'I think I am,' retorted Justinian frankly. 'You say you know her. Don't you think so yourself?'

'Really, my dear fellow, that is not a fair question. Naturally I cannot say other than that your father has made his choice, and no doubt on excellent reasons.'

'That is not an answer at all. I tell you freely that I did not readily swallow the tidings that I had a stepmother. I was very angry; but when I saw her, and had a talk with her, I found that I had been mistaken; and it is the place of a gentleman to acknowledge when he has been in error, and only a fool persists in his prejudice after he has been shown that he was mistaken. So—there—I have had no proper reasons. Alice, get on your hat.'

'No,' said Mrs. Curgenven, 'Alice was not well this morning. I detected a slight cobweb in her throat, and the weather is damp. I do not wish her to go out. Indeed, I am going to administer bryonia.'

'Mamma, I am quite well!' said the astonished girl.

'My dear, you try to persuade yourself that you are. Stay here—or, no—come up with me to my room. You must have a sip of bryonia every two hours out of my china spoon. Justinian, when bryonia is administered there must be no exposure to damp. Follow me, Alice, at once. Justinian, remain where you are till my return.'

As soon as the mother and daughter were in the hall, Alice remonstrated against being made to take medicine.

'Mamma, I really am perfectly well.'

'My dear, I ought to judge that better than you. You take bryonia to prevent your going to the manor house. Now go to my room and wait there for me. You can get out the china spoon if you like, it is in the medicine chest.'

Then Mrs. Curgenven entered the study, shut the door behind her, and said to her father, who was then engaged on the 'Contemporary' and a sermon in little dips and alternations: 'Papa, here is a pretty kettle of fish. Justinian wishes to carry off Alice to bow down to and worship that woman, and he has taken me to task for not visiting her. What is to be done?'

'Jane, of course we must be ordinarily civil.'

'I cannot dissemble. If she were in a Penitentiary I would

cheerfully visit her daily, and I would go without Devonshire cream for a twelvemonth, even in the black currant tart, if by my self-denial I could save her soul; but I cannot, and will not, countenance her at Curgenven.'

'But, Jane, you must remember that she is the wife of our squire, who is your poor husband's cousin. There will be a great deal of talk, and very unpleasant talk, if you hold yourself aloof. What can people say to explain your conduct but what is most distressing to think could be said of a member of the Curgenven family.'

'I don't care three straws what people say. I will not regard her as a relation.'

'Then why did you ask my opinion? You have made up your mind.'

'I ask, because here is Justinian at me for not going to the manor house, and refusing to take any excuse for Alice. I am obliged to dose her with bryonia.'

'Why, what is the matter with her?'

'Nothing; but I must make an excuse for her not going to the house to-day. He will be plaguing me again to-morrow. I can't keep Alice perpetually on bryonia.'

'No, I do not see myself how you can help letting Alice go to the house, and going yourself.'

'Good gracious! My dear father! To *that* woman!'

'Why not? You know absolutely nothing against her. Her manners leave nothing to be desired. She is highly educated. Except that she was a governess, and has no relations, she is unexceptionable.'

'Goodness me! Really, papa—and rector with the care of souls, and hoping to be a bishop! I do not understand this moral obtuseness. But there, men are differently constituted from women. I believe this, even clergymen rather prefer a spice of wickedness in good-looking women.'

'My dear Jane, you forget the respect due to me—to my age, my avocation, my relation to yourself.'

'I beg your pardon, papa; I was a little hot. I could not help it. What am I to do?'

'There, you ask my advice again, without the slightest intention of following it; nevertheless, I will give it. It will not do for you to hold aloof from the squire. You will tear the parish into two factions, one siding with her, one with you.'

Percival will be extremely angry, and will refuse his subscriptions to the charities and bring the organisation to a standstill. I shall have to dismiss either the Scripture-reader or the mission-woman. If I get rid of the former all the Evangelicals will be up in arms, and denounce me as gravitating to sacerdotalism; if I dismiss the mission-woman, I shall have all the High Church folk shaking the dust off their feet against me as wholly sunk in the slough of Puritanism. If I am not *via media*, I am nothing. But that is not all. Consider the very unpleasant situation we shall be in with the neighbours. The estrangement will be commented on, and there is simply no estimating the extravagance of the myths that will be formed relative to Percival's wife. You must also bear in mind that Lady Carminow is a woman free from prejudices and of a very decided character. How do you know but that Lady Carminow may take it into her head to visit and make much of Percival's wife? It is precisely the thing she is likely to do. And if she does this, do you not know that at once the whole neighbourhood, from Lady Tregontick down to every curate's wife, will veer round and vie with each other in courting her? Then where will you be?'

'Yes,' said Jane bitterly, 'Lady Carminow is capable of even that. I never can forgive her laying the foundation-stone of the Ranters' chapel at Cartuthers.'

'This must be weighed. Take my advice, Jane, and be decently civil to Mrs. Percival. Then you can always draw back at any time, or push forward, according to circumstances.'

'That I never will do. Never! I have too much self-respect to push forward with *her*.'

'Very well. Maintain a cold and ceremonious demeanour.'

'A cold and ceremonious demeanour I will, if I can. I cannot call black white; and if society should take up that person, so much the worse for society. I shall be clear of participation. So far—society has taken much the same view of her that I have.'

'Perhaps you managed that.'

'I have not spoken of her.'

'Exactly; and your chilling reception of any word spoken about her has made society suppose that there is more behind the scenes than there really is. You are uncharitable.'

'We shall never agree on this head,' said Jane, 'and therefore had better cease to speak about it. Something, however, must be settled, that I may not be worried by the importunities of

Justinian. He has been won over now, and quite admires this precious stepmother.'

'What I desire, Jane, is, that there be no open quarrel. Maintain a semblance of good terms, for the sake of the parish, of the charities, the organisation—for my sake. If it be said that there is a quarrel between me and my squire—who is also in a fashion a connection—it may stand in the way of my advancement.'

'Very well, papa,' said Jane, after some rumination, 'I will call, and by my manner, I trust, I shall be able to let that person understand, unless she wears rhinoceros hide, that exteriorly we are on speaking terms, but that acquaintanceship stops there. As to Alice, never will I allow her into the manor house whilst that woman is there. I trust I value my child's immortal soul too highly to submit it to so great peril.'

'Peril—fiddle faddle!'

'You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled. You cannot associate with that sort of creature without a lowering of moral tone. I have told you, papa, the limits of my submission to your wishes. Now I will go, give Alice her bryonia, and then put on my bonnet, and walk with Justinian and make this call. I'll get it over at once.'

'Very well, my dear; now leave me to my sermon.'

When Jane Curgenven had made up her mind to do a thing that was disagreeable, she did it at once. Accordingly, after having administered the bryonia as a matter of conscience—not that Alice required it, but because she had said she would administer it—then Jane Curgenven started with Justinian to call at the manor.

She was by no means sure that the squiress would receive her, for she was aware that her behaviour to Theresa on the Sunday had been discourteous if not insolent. Jane had satisfied her own conscience as to her conduct. 'I am not a hypocrite. What I feel I express. If that person resents my treatment of her—it makes no difference to me—I have done what I undertook. If she receives me and is civil, it will be very clear that she has a guilty conscience, knows that I was in the right, and cringes to me to obtain my silence.'

But Jane did not find Theresa at home. The footman informed her that Mr. and Mrs. Curgenven had just left the house in the dog-cart for Liskeard. This was a relief to her mind. She left her card and departed.

Percival had driven his wife into Liskeard to have a look at

the Pill-box, and decide what was to be done with its furniture. The lease would soon be up, and he was undecided whether to have the contents sold, or whether to remove them to Curgenven, or, again, whether he would sell part and retain a moiety of the articles. A groom sat behind in the dog-cart, so that Theresa and her husband could not converse with freedom during the drive. Moreover, on reaching the Pill-box, Bathsheba, who had returned to it, not having proved a success as housekeeper over a large establishment, had much to say, grievances to complain of, and inquiries to make relative to her favourite, Master Justinian.

After a while Percival was able to send the old woman about some commission in the town, and then he threw himself into his old smoking arm-chair, drew Theresa to him, put his arm about her, and looked round.

‘I say, T——, I had no conception it was so dirty and small. Do look at the smoked ceiling—see how shabby the paper is. Fancy enduring for so long a mangy red-flock paper! It is stuffy—one can hardly breathe here.’

‘Poor old house. You were happy here—you must love it.’

‘I don’t see that. I was happy in spite of it. Why, T——, think of the study at home, and then look at this.’ Curgenven was home to him now.

‘Upon my word, T——, it is a wonder to me how men can consent to live in such tight quarters. It is not wholesome. There should be a law against it. The State takes care that in school-rooms there be sufficient cubic feet of air. It should forbid the construction of a house in which there is not breathing space.’

‘You have been in worse places than the Pill-box.’

‘I know I have. I look back with horror on existence as it was then, just as does a butterfly, I suppose, on its chrysalis or caterpillar state.’

‘But, Percival, suppose, like Sly, you were to wake up and find it all a dream, and you were back in the Pill-box, after a brief period of lordship?’

‘Like Sly, I’d say: “Come, madam wife, sit by my side, and let the world slip; we shall ne’er be younger.”’

‘What, Percival, you would be content?’

‘Not I—my only consolation would be that I should take you with me, heart’s delight.’

Theresa put her arm about his neck.

‘You would reconcile yourself to it?’ she said.

‘Never. Indeed, I am not sure but that, having you here, and not being able to give you the comforts and pleasures you deserve, I would feel it as an aggravation of the ill.’

‘And yet there is something to be said on the other side. It is no secret that the society of Philistia does not choose to accept me, and that this is an awkwardness and irritation to you. It places you in difficulties.’

‘My own T——, what care I for the society of Philistia? They showed me the cold shoulder when I lived in the Pill-box. Now good folk would like to be civil, but you puzzle them, because they cannot find you in Burke or Walford. Moreover, Jane has been telling tales, or hinting evil, after the fashion of the professionally pious. The Philistines are slow and timorous in the extreme, each afraid of the other. Do not concern yourself about them. I did not when in this house. I saw their carriages, their broughams and victorias, and landaus pass, and never did one stop at this door. I got along without them, and I shall get along without them very comfortably till it pleases them to come round in their sluggish way. When they do, I accept it, not for my sake, but for yours. But as for the society of Philistia—I care for it not a snap. Bless you, T——, dearest, we who have knocked about the world, and have brains of quicksilver, cannot find much pleasure in association with brains of white lead and linseed oil kneaded into a putty.’

‘But, Percival, suppose that there had been some mistake about the property, and that a will were found.’

‘Oh, you have had that nonsense propounded before you. Physic told me something of the sort. I do not believe for a moment that such a will exists. If it exists, why has it not been produced? The only person who would be interested in concealing or destroying such a will would be myself, and, by George! I’m not the man to do such a thing as that.’

‘And if you found the will you would give it up?’

‘I would—and then shoot myself.’

‘And I——’

‘My dearest T——, I know as well as you that I should be merely an incumbrance to you. I cannot earn my livelihood. I tried as a surgeon and, after killing one or two of my patients, took to art, and never sold a picture. I had not learned perspective nor how to mix my colours. I went sheep-farming in the Rockies, and lost my sheep. I was taken in—bought a farm where there

could be no provision for the sheep in the winter. They starved—I was ruined. I tried a clerkship, but I never in my life could do compound addition. I was kicked out. By Moses! T——, I have tried being everything but being a waiter, and have made a botch of everything. The long and the short of it is, I'm an ass. Dear old Lambert took me up and cared for me. But I am incapable now as I was before of earning enough to find me in bread and butter. I have the best will, but I can't do it. I know what the end would be: you would take in needlework and wear these dear fingers to the bone to maintain me. Rather than that, I'd blow my brains out. I'd do the honest and right thing, if that will turned up, and then I'd make my *congé* to a world in which I don't know how to live except as a gentleman who has inherited a fortune which he is incapable of acquiring for himself. But there, away with these thoughts. Thank heaven!—I do it heartily—there is and can be no such a will. Physic has tried to scare me, and some one—Jane, I suppose—has been playing on your fears. I snap my fingers under the nose of the bogie. There is no such will.'

CHAPTER XLI.

AGAIN: INVENI PORTUM.

MR. CURGENVEN and Justinian went for a couple of nights to the house of Sir Sampson Tregontick for a shooting party. Justinian was a keen sportsman and a good shot; Percival was a sportsman by fits and starts, and not a successful one when he had the fit on him.

Theresa was not sorry that they were away; she had to form a decision as to her course with Physic, and then take it. She desired to be alone to consider what she should do. There was no one whom she could consult. She had no friend save her husband, and she was precluded from laying the matter before him. Bitterly, but with a sense of its ineffectuality, did she reproach herself for having placed in the agent's hand the weapon with which he now threatened her. If she had withheld the document, looked at it before it left her possession, this condition of affairs would not have existed.

She locked herself into her boudoir and opened the jewel-case. She drew from it the same jewels she had exhibited to Esther,

and sat looking at them and musing. They—the finest of them, at all events—were heirlooms. Jane Curgenven had had them in her possession, but had conscientiously relinquished them. Theresa knew how much it must have cost Jane to resign these to herself; but Jane had done it, actuated by her strict sense of justice, with scrupulous rectitude, not retaining a single ring or brooch which she could not say had been a present to herself. And now Theresa was asked to alienate from the family these ornaments that had decorated the Curgenven ladies for several generations. Could she do it? She weighed the reasons urging to compliance with Physic's demand. They were cogent. If this will could be got from him and destroyed, then the Curgenven family would be delivered from the scandal of the revelation of the relations in which Captain Lambert had stood to Jane Pamphlet. This was the more important, as Theresa saw there was a growing inclination towards each other between the young people. A marriage between Justinian and Alice would heal everything, if only the secret of the invalidity of the marriage of Alice's mother could be kept from the world. The cousins were much together now, and their affection for each other was ripening. Were Percival with herself and Justinian banished from Curgenven, then in all probability this nascent passion would be nipped in the bud. Percival would leave England and take his son with him. Jane Curgenven would do all that lay in her power to stop the intimacy.

For this reason it seemed worth while, at the cost of the jewelry, to secure the will. But, on the other hand, Theresa shrank from the consequences to herself. The day might come when the heirlooms would be required of her; the jewels might be looked for after her death, and she would be accused of having misappropriated them. If they were asked for in her lifetime, she would not be able to give her reasons for having disposed of them, and it might reawaken suspicion in her husband, and turn away his heart from her. In future generations she would be spoken of as the dishonest woman who had fraudulently got rid of this treasure of the family. She could conceive in what terms Jane would refer to her, when Alice was squiress of Curgenven, and the family jewelry was not forthcoming wherewith to array her. Jane trampled on her in life, and would trample on her when dead. The loss of the necklaces, and rings, and brooches would be used as corroborative proof against her character. Yet she, Theresa, was called on to make the sacrifice, not only to preserve her own

fortune, but also Jane's good name. To save Jane's good name she must steep her own in ignominy!

Theresa put up the jewels, unlocked her door, and went out to walk in the garden. Her responsibility overwhelmed her, and her blood was in a fever, her brain in a whirl. At one moment she thought she would let Physic do his worst. At the next she shrank from the prospect of being cast on the world again, and was prepared to make any sacrifice to escape that. At one moment it seemed to her right to allow Captain Lambert's last wishes to take effect, at whatever cost to the family; and then she doubted whether it was his last wish to brand his child with bastardy. Surely, she said, he drew up that will on the supposition that I, on reappearing, would assert my right to be his wife or widow, claim the name, and put in some plea for sustentation from the property. I have not done any of this. I have been willing to let my rights be covered over; and to save his memory, to spare the feelings of his wife, to prevent a slur falling on his child, I have consented to let the past be as a thing that had not been. Under these circumstances the aspect of the case is altered. Had he thought I would do this, he would never have made that will. I am fulfilling his best wishes in doing what I can at whatever cost to recover and destroy it.

She longed, she craved for advice, for someone to whom to confide her difficulties, and who, with clear sight into the ways of right and wrong, might lead her to do what was not only expedient for all concerned, but what was the course morally justifiable.

As if in answer to this cry out of her heart, the rector appeared before her.

'Oh, Mr. Pamphlet!' She ran to him with a flutter at her heart, a crimson spot in each cheek, and with both hands extended. 'Oh! Mr. Pamphlet, do help me! I want advice in great difficulty. Do come with me into the walled garden, and let me tell you all.'

'Most assuredly,' answered the rector, blandly. 'Providence and the bishop have placed me here as pastor of souls, to guide the doubtful, strengthen the weak, raise the fallen, and clear the clouds from before all darkened eyes, to the best of my poor ability.'

'That is exactly what I want—what I want above everything in the world,' gasped Theresa. 'Oh, how kind, how good of you!'

'Not at all; it is my duty, by virtue of my office and commission.'

She threw open the garden gate, and both entered. There

was a long wall against which old figs grew, and she turned to that. No gardeners were about. In the fig walk they could be alone, unobserved and not overheard. They paced together the whole length of the walk before she spoke; they turned at the end, by the tool-house, and then he said encouragingly, 'Now—what is it?'

'Mr. Pamphlet, my poor husband, in his will——'

'Good gracious! He has gone out rabbit-shooting—there has not occurred an accident?'

'No. I mean Captain Lambert.'

'Oh!'

'He made a will by which he provided for your daughter under her maiden name, and for his child by her.'

'Oh!' Mr. Pamphlet's face grew long and blank.

'This is in existence, but has not been produced. We are threatened with its production.'

'Merciful powers! If this get about—and anyone could go to Somerset House and see the will for a shilling—then my chances of elevation to a bish—I mean my ministerial efficacy in the parish would be crippled!'

'The will leaves everything to your daughter and grandchild.'

'Yes—but—I would rather sacrifice everything than have this come out.'

'Then what do you think should be done?'

'I—I think—I——'

'There has been an offer made to compromise the matter. That is to say, the will will be delivered into my hands on condition that I surrender the family jewels.'

'What, to suppress—tear up the will! But that is a felony. Why did you mention this to me?'

The rector's face became pink, showing doubly so by contrast with his white whiskers.

'Am I justified in accepting this offer?'

'Oh, don't ask me. For heaven's sake, consult anyone—Percival, Physic—anyone but me. I don't want to be mixed up in this matter at all.'

'I cannot speak of it to my husband, for you know his direct manner: he would say "Prove the will!" without considering results, how they affected himself or anyone else. I cannot consult Mr. Physic for other reasons. I have no one to confer with but yourself in this matter—in this difficulty.'

‘Oh! good gracious! I want to hear no more about it. It might do me serious harm. I had better know nothing; then, should there be trouble, I could safely protest my ignorance.’

‘But, Mr. Pamphlet! it affects your interests, as you yourself admitted.’

‘Ye—s.’ He dropped the umbrella he was carrying from his shaking hand, and when he stooped to pick it up, his hat fell on the path from his shaking head.

‘I have to decide, and decide at once, whether to sacrifice the jewels or not.’

‘But the jewels are an heirloom, are most valuable. You have really no right—oh, why did you consult me about this? I am involved in a matter out of which I wish to keep clear.’

‘It is for your own sake and your daughter’s that I consult you.’

‘I see—I see—but, goodness! I do not know what to say.’

‘Would you advise me to allow of the production of the will?’

‘That would be fatal to my interests. It would blast my family with eternal disgrace.’

‘Then shall I surrender the jewels?’

‘That would be robbery of the family. You have no right to dispose of them.’

‘Then what am I to do?’

‘Is there no other way—can you not frighten—threaten the person, whoever he be, that has this will?’

‘How threaten—frighten?’

‘He is committing felony in retaining it.’

‘That would but force him to produce it.’

‘I see. My head is turning. Can’t you say you have no right to dispose of the jewels?’

‘He knows that as well as I.’

‘Then—I really do not know what to say. I had best advise nothing, and I must adapt myself to whatever happens as best I can.’

‘Then, Mr. Pamphlet, I want guidance in my doubt, and you cannot give it me?’

‘I don’t want to compromise myself.’

‘And you cannot advise?’

‘No—I’d rather not. I don’t know what to advise.’

‘Nor clear the clouds from my darkened eyes?’

‘Indeed, no—oh dear, no!’ After a long pause and deep meditation, and much combing of his white whiskers with the dis-

engaged fingers, Mr. Pamphlet said, 'And yet I can give you my advice. I was wrong in saying I could not—my matured and weighty advice in this matter——'

'And that is——?'

'To form your own opinion on it, and, having formed, to follow it.'

They left the garden, and Theresa walked with the rector through the churchyard to the garden gate of the parsonage. He avoided all further reference to the subject of consultation, and spoke of the weather, the rabbit shooting, the schools, and parochial matters. The night had begun to close in. It was not dark, but gloomy, a dull leaden shadow hung over the landscape, and the distance was obscure. Theresa turned at the gate, after having with a heavy heart bidden the rector farewell.

'Shall I go back with you to the house?' he asked hesitatingly; 'night is falling rapidly.'

'No, thank you, I know my way, the white space of the path is visible enough.'

'And you are not afraid to go through the churchyard alone?'

'Why should I? I have not annoyed the dead.'

'There are two or three paths, mind not to take that to the left; it leads to the place where the heating apparatus is, and there are steps to it.'

'You need not fear.'

Then Theresa set off at a quick pace to cross the graveyard. The church rose as a huge black patch against the sky before her.

The rector also turned to walk home, but changed his mind, and said to himself, 'I will wait till she is 'through.'

Theresa did not know this. She stepped on, more troubled in mind than before. She had sought light, and been given none. The day was appointed on which she was to meet Physic at Tolmena, and by then the decision must be made one way or other.

As she came near the flat tombstone on which she had reposed on Sunday, she was startled to see in the darkness a figure as of a man seated where she had been, and he seemed to be doing what she had done, tracing the letters on the stone with his finger. Her heart stood still, her feet were arrested. Then, as he traced, she saw each letter shine phosphorescent in the dark:—

Inveni portum, spes et Fortuna valet.

She uttered an exclamation of terror.

He turned his face, a lambent light played over it, and she knew her first husband.

With a cry she sank to the ground and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XLII.

A THIRD ALTERNATIVE.

THERESA did not return to full consciousness at once. There came to her glimpses of light and bursts of sound, episodes of wakefulness to movement, and to a sight of drawn curtains and a sound of whispers, and then tracts of insensibility.

When she did awake to full possession of her faculties, she found herself in bed in her own room, and she heard the voices of her husband and of the doctor. Both had been summoned.

The first sentence she heard and understood was spoken by the medical attendant. He said: 'She must be kept perfectly quiet, and not be bothered about the jam. Her heart is affected.'

Theresa raised herself on her elbow, and said: 'Yes, I knew that—since my last illness.'

'It was the jam—and very provoking,' exclaimed the surgeon. But Percival ran to the bedside and took her hand between his and said: 'You are better, T——; nearly right again! That is capital!'

'What has happened?' she asked.

'My dearest T——, you have given us such a fright!'

'And I——' she mused. 'Yes, I have had a fright, too.'

'It was the rats,' threw in the surgeon. 'Twas vexing, I allow, and sixteen pots of jam. All the brandy cherries, also.'

'You have had a succession of fainting fits. You fell back into one as soon as brought round. We were afraid you would slip away altogether, between our fingers, in one of them. Then, T——, what should I have done?'

She looked affectionately into his face, and he stooped and kissed her.

'I had a fright; I suppose that was it,' said Theresa meditatively. 'Yes, I was coming through the churchyard——' Then she interrupted herself, turned to the doctor, and asked, 'May I get up?'

'Not to-night. Perhaps to-morrow. But, mind this; don't

you go exciting yourself over pots of jam and brandy cherries any more.'

'Pots of jam?'

'Ah, yes! I know all about it. I made inquiries, and found that the rats had been at the store closet, and had eaten the parchment off sixteen pots, so that the fruit was mildewed, and had in the same way uncovered the brandy cherries, put their tails in, sucked them, and absorbed all the juice. It was very vexing, but you must not fret over these matters. You will have to buy, that is all. Don't worry yourself any more. Leave all that to the housekeeper, and keep your heart emotionless. It must be saved all kind of agitation.'

'I had forgotten about the jams.'

'Oh, no, that was it! The housekeeper told me how it disturbed you. You've been brooding over it—that is what has done it. Now, dear lady, be brave, be heroic; banish the jams and the brandy cherries from your thoughts, and set yourself to get well. That is my best advice. The heart is a delicate and capricious instrument, like a chronometer. It must not be treated jerkily, but gingerly. You understand?'

When the doctor was gone, Theresa made Percival take a chair by her bedside, and said: 'Now, tell me all about it.'

'The old boy found you.'

'Who is he?'

'I mean Mr. Pamphlet. He came to the house to say that he had found you in the churchyard in a fainting fit.'

'I dare say. I had been talking to him in the walled garden, and I accompanied him through the yard to his wicket-gate. Then I turned.' She pressed Percival's hand with a nervous spasm, and said: 'I saw Lambert there—I mean in the graveyard.'

'Fudge!'

'I did. He was sitting on a flat stone, and was writing on it in Latin.'

'Now, T——, that is clearly impossible. Dear old Lambert had no more knowledge of Latin than

Amo, amas,
I loved a lass!

and, unfortunately for him, he loved two, and was not off with the old before he was on with the new. That's the length of his Latin. You won't make me believe he's been to a grammar

school in kingdom come, and has become so ready with his classics that he can scribble in the Latin tongue.'

'I do not quite mean that, Percy. I had seen this tombstone on Sunday. The lines on it are—

*Inveni portum, spes et Fortuna valete ;
Nil mihi vobiscum : ludite nunc alios.*

'They are beyond me.'

'I am no scholar, but I think I know the sense. It is this: I have found harbour. Hope and Good Fortune, farewell. I have nothing more to do with you. Go now, make sport of others.'

'I don't like the sentiment at all,' said Percival; 'but I can't say that it did not apply to poor old Lambert. However, the whole thing is nonsense and fiddlesticks.'

'I saw him. He drew his finger along the letters, and then they became luminous. When I uttered an exclamation, he turned his face round to me.'

'My dear T——! the whole is a delusion. You have been over-exciting yourself—not about the jam and cherries in brandy, as the doctor thinks, but about other things. There has been Physic, or someone, frightening you concerning a will of Lambert's. I know there has. You spoke to me about it. Very well; the point is established. You have been fretting over Lambert. Very natural that, when a little out of health, you should fancy you saw him. Then you say you read that inscription on the tombstone last Sunday. You had been thinking of that, and you came to associate Lambert with the words. So, when your heated imagination conjured him up, it also made him scribble those lines. I don't know that I ever came across a ghost story so simple of explanation. Send the thoughts of the poor old fellow back into the grave to sleep with him, and bother the Latin. It is not a fit inscription over any Christian. And, to please the doctor, don't think of the jam and brandy cherries. So you will be all right in a day or two.'

'I shall not be all right till the battle is over.'

'What battle?'

'The battle of life.'

'You have no cause to fight it.'

'Not, perhaps, the same battle as of old. But I cannot rest—I will not say on my laurels, for I have won none, but on a bed of poppies.'

'What have you to disturb you now?'

‘Formerly, in that Bohemia in which we had to live—though neither of us belonged to it—we had a struggle for existence. I had to earn my daily bread, to strive under a thousand adverse circumstances, and to maintain my integrity through all—not an easy matter in Bohemia. The atmosphere is enervating there to the moral sense, though stimulating to the mental powers. However, I held my own; but it was a hard fight, and at last I broke down. My heart gave way, and I was forbidden to undertake any more professional work in concerts. Then I came very near to starvation. You know the rest. Your dear hand helped me.’

She looked fondly in Percival’s face, and put up her lips to kiss him.

‘You helped me. You placed me where I am. I am in a new sphere.’

‘I see—you worry now because you have Jane and the world of Common Place to fight. The pious don’t know what to make of you. Leave Jane alone, and concern yourself no more about her. It is a leaden weight crushing your heart. Shake it off.’

‘It is not that. I am making no fight for position, or for recognition in my position. I am content with the place, your love, and Justinian’s regard. I have had other troubles.’

‘Oh, that affair about the three hundred pounds! Indigent relatives. Confound them! Now, take my advice, T——. It is that I gave you when they began to worry you. Refer them all to Physic, or to me; we will settle them between us. Do not allow them to tease you any longer. Now that your health suffers, it won’t do. I shall be angry, and send the police after them.’

‘It was not altogether that——’

‘Then what was it?’

She remained silent. She could not tell him.

‘Now, look here, dearest T——,’ said Percival. ‘If you have any bother, put it into Physic’s hands. He is paid to take this sort of thing off our shoulders, and he can manage it much better than we can. It is his business, and it don’t worry him. Indeed, he rather likes it. However, let all these matters be put aside now. You must on no account excite yourself. Let us change the topic. What will amuse you? What do you say to letting me see the Curgenven jewelry. I never have seen it. Come, let me have the key, and I will bring the case here. It will divert your thoughts, and will give me a pleasure.’

‘Oh, Percy, please not!’

‘Yes—your mind must be directed into another channel. Women love jewelry. Where is the key?’

She gave him what he asked for, and in a few minutes he brought the case to her bed. Then Percival moved the lamp near to the bed, and lighted all the candles in the room. ‘I must see the diamonds sparkle,’ he said.

He unlocked the case and produced each article in the order in which it lay in the velvet-lined trays.

‘I have a list of them all and their estimated values,’ said Percival. ‘That was all taken after Lambert’s death, but there is a list that Jane gave me as well. And I see there is one in the box. It is as well to have several lists in case of accident or robbery.’

Percival continued for some time trifling with and admiring the jewels, under the impression that he was giving pleasure to his wife, or at all events diverting her thoughts from the topics that had occupied them.

‘T——, my love, next year Justinian is of age, and we will give a great ball then. You shall wear the diamond necklace Queen Anne gave to Lady Margaret Curgenven, and the tiara also. It will be a pleasure to see you in them, and I’ll swear finer diamonds are not to be seen in Cornwall. I said something to-day about a ball, and you should have seen how Lady Tregontick and the girls jumped. She at once told me that she was coming to call on you. And you may be quite certain that every mother with a marriageable daughter will put her scruples in her pocket and come and see you—for Justinian’s sake. I do not think there are many who would not give their ears to see a daughter married to the heir of Curgenven. The women have been hanging back because Jane has done mischief. But Jane does not direct their consciences; self-interest does that.’

He looked round at his wife. Her eyes were closed.

‘You are tired,’ he said; ‘I am afraid I have talked too much. I will put the jewels away where you keep them, and bring back the key. The place is safe, unless a burglar got into your room.’

Percival kissed Theresa and left. Her hands were folded under the bedclothes over her heart.

What was to be done? After what Percival had said, it was not possible for her to dispose of the jewels. Next year she would

be required to wear them—at the coming of age of Justinian. She was woman enough to feel satisfaction at the thought that in spite of Jane Curgenven she would be recognised by the county. What Percival had said was true. The squirearchy, or rather the female adherents of the squires, would swallow their prejudices, tread down their doubts, and receive her among themselves, if not cordially, at all events formally, for the sake of a ball and of the chance of catching Justinian. Jane would, of course, not come to the ball, but would hear the carriages drive past the rectory on the way to the Hall, carriage succeeding carriage, and be taught thereby that she was defeated—the scorned woman was Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven. No one loves to be trampled on. Theresa cared for no better revenge than this, though she had in her power the means of executing a terrible one on her rival. She might bow herself and bring down the house, but, like Samson, to her own destruction; and it would be poor satisfaction to be buried under the same ruins with Jane Curgenven.

The morrow was the day of decision.

If Theresa remained at home, the affairs of the Curgenven family would settle themselves. The wheel would turn, and the revolution would be complete. She, and Percival, and Justinian would be cast on the world, and Jane, with a blasted name and her child branded as a bastard, would occupy Curgenven without being qualified to bear the name of Curgenven.

What could she do? She could not endure this prospect. Wearied to death, worn out with struggle, her health failing, her spirits broken, she was unequal to the task of recommencing life in poverty. She thought of the drudgery of existence when every shilling has to be considered. The strain to make both ends of a very short purse meet—she was unequal to it. Twenty years ago she would cheerily have faced poverty. It was now twenty years too late.

But how avert the danger?

The jewels she could not surrender. Even if she suffered them to be held in pawn, could she be sure of raising the money to redeem them when needed? Could she be sure that Percival would not ask to see them when they were out of the house? Could she be sure that Physic would not make away with them? perhaps replace the finest diamonds with imitation stones which she could not detect. Was there no alternative, no third course possible? Theresa thought of the words on the tombstone, and

felt a longing for rest, even if it could be in the harbour of the grave only. For herself it would have been well had she not recovered from the swoon into which she had fallen. But she loved Percival. She loved him with all her heart. He was the one object to which she clung. She clung, knowing his infirmity, but forgiving that for the sake of the great good there was in him. For his sake she would live—live to deliver him, if possible, from the danger menacing him.

Would Physic use the will as he threatened? Might she not trust that he would see that his own interests lay in keeping it in his desk? But there would be no rest from his exactions, no relief from annoyance so long as Physic retained the document. Theresa again asked herself, Was there no third course open to her? And suddenly, with a scorching flash like a lightning-stroke athwart her brain, came the words of the rector. There was a third course. She might threaten him, and wring the will from him through playing on his fears.

(To be continued.)

SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF WILLIAM
WORDSWORTH.

It is interesting to observe that the most enthusiastic admirers of Wordsworth are to be drawn, for the most part, from the ranks of his fellow poets, contemporary and following, rather than from the ordinary lovers of poetry, to whom a certain sense of incongruity not uncommonly presents itself in the fact of the poet's adopting, as the source of his inspiration, the more common and matter-of-fact side of things mundane. But to hold the mirror to Nature *as she is* was precisely what the poet conceived to be his mission and province. He was the alchemist by whose art baser metal was turned to gold.

A yellow primrose was something more than a yellow primrose to the eye which had the gift of discerning its inner meaning; and in like manner, the common joys and sorrows of humanity, albeit their pathos might be disguised by the coarse setting of poverty, or distorted and obscured by the narrow limit of human intellect, appealed directly to his heart. He somewhere speaks of the 'humbleness, meanness, if you like, of my subject, together with the homely mode of treating it,' admitting that from motives of policy he would often have excluded that which, for humanity's sake, he puts into verse and publishes.

And, indeed, his whole life is a consistent record of the largest humanitarianism, which, with his sympathy and fellowship with the world of Nature, can be unerringly traced in almost every line of his writings. Neither elaboration of ideas, nor embroidery of language is their main characteristic, but on every page shine out the manly, gentle soul, and the wide comprehensive grasp by which he drew to himself the sympathies and affections of all within his range. A little child's hand, a dog, an insect, a 'wee, pale blossom'—nothing seems to have been too small or too insignificant to be the object of his tender regard.

And we cannot but view Wordsworth with feelings of gratitude while contemplating the pedantry and affectation which mingled so largely with the poetry of his period: those traditional artificialities of style wherein sense was so frequently sacrificed to sound—from all of which Wordsworth, with his earnest struggle for

Truth, and his sturdy, uncompromising aim at Reality, did so much towards delivering us.

It is not, however, the object of the writer of this paper to criticise either the poet or his works, but to transcribe for the benefit of those who may be interested in them, some of his unpublished letters. Before me lies a large number, and in turning them over, one is impressed by their honest simplicity and directness of purpose; their sincerity and warmth of expression, and the intense solicitude they evince for the well-being of those to whom they are addressed.

They also present to one's notice other characteristics which the reader will be quick to observe. Very noticeable, for instance, is the complete absence of playfulness, or anything approaching a sense of fun in any one of the series (there are more than forty), all written to members of the immediate family circle, and some under circumstances that would naturally have given rise to a jest, a light word, or a merry turn to a sentence, had the inclination, or, shall we say, the capacity of the writer tended in any way in that direction.

But, then, who could realise a *humorous* Wordsworth? Search his works through and through, and the poem containing the faintest glimmer of humour remains yet to be discovered. It is as well to note his peculiarity in this respect, because we at once recognise that, had his nature been endowed with the slightest touch of appreciation for the ludicrous, we might have been spared many a jangling note, many a jarring discord which has clashed with the sweet music we love so well.

One solitary suggestion of 'amusement,' as the poet himself puts it, certainly does occur in the letter first quoted. It refers to some lines afterwards published in the *Sonnets to Liberty and Order*, and with it he apparently endeavours to take off the edge, as it were, of the sad theme touched upon in the earlier half of the letter—namely, the mental affliction of his dearly loved sister, Dorothy.

A defect in the MS. has obliterated part of the poem referring to this subject, but it can be found complete in the published works, together with a comment added by the poet, who, as it appears from the words of the letter, was anxious its origin should not be misunderstood. He says: 'The sad condition of poor Mrs. Southey put me upon writing this. It has afforded comfort to many persons whose friends have been similarly affected.'

‘MY DEAR DORA,—Read the following remodelling of the Sonnet I addressed to S. The personalities are omitted, a few lines only retained :—

Oh, what a wreck ! How changed in mien and speech !
 Yet, though dread Powers that work in mystery, spin
 Entanglings for her brain ; though shadows stretch
 O'er the chilled heart—reflect ! far, far within
 Hers is a holy Being, freed from sin :
 She is not what she seems, a forlorn wretch ;
 But delegated Spirits comfort fetch
 To her from heights that Reason may not win.

Only illumined by Heaven's pitying love,
 Love pitying innocence, not long to last,
 In them, in Her, our sins and sorrows past.

‘The Sonnet, as first sent you and S. may be kept, if thought worthy, as a private record ; the meaning in the passage you object to is certainly not happily brought out ; if you think it better thus, alter it :—

Over the sacred heart compassion's twin,
 The heart that once could feel for every wretch.

The thought in the Sonnet as it now stands has ever been a consolation to me, almost as far back as I can remember, and hope that, thus expressed, it may prove so to others, makes one wish to print it ; but your mother seems to think it would be applied at once to your dear aunt. I own I do not see the force of this objection, but if you and Miss Fenwick, and others, should be of the same mind, it shall be suppressed. It is already sent to the Press, but not as it now stands ; if you think it may be printed without impropriety, pray be so good as to superintend the revise which I shall order the Printer to send you : this would save time, for I could not entrust the revise to the Printer only.

‘This is sent for your amusement ; it will go by Mr. Fleming to Cambridge for your cousin John, to be printed without my name, if he thinks it worth while, in the ——

Said Secresy to Cowardice and Fraud,
 Falsehood and Treachery, in close council met
 Deep underground in Pluto's cabinet :
 ‘The frost of England's pride will soon be thawed ;
 Hooded the open brow that overawed
 Our schemes : the faith and honour, never yet
 By us with hope encountered, be upset.
 For once I burst my bands, and cry “Applaud !”’

Then whispered she, 'The Bill is carrying out !'
 They heard, and starting up, the Brood of Night
 Clapp'd hands, and shook with glee their matted locks ;
 All Powers and Places that abhor the light
 Joined in the transport, echoed back their shout,
 Hurrah ! for Grote, hugging his Ballot-box !'

If Dora possessed political tendencies with a leaning towards Conservatism, it may be that she was enabled to derive some entertainment from the rather ponderous levity of the above lines. They had reference, of course, to the introduction of the Ballot Bill into the House of Commons, and so help us to an indication as to when the letter was written ; for, like most of its companions, it is undated. In the printed version of the lines the word 'Grote' is omitted. Possibly, as Mr. Grote was a well-known author in one of the highest walks of literature, as well as a leading politician, the insertion of his name was thought to be an indiscretion : in 1893, however, we can afford to be less particular.

Most of the letters being, as already remarked, undated, it is not easy to arrange them in anything like order. The one given below, however, dates itself by its reference to the work upon which the poet was engaged. The tragedy of *The Borderers* to which he alludes, though written in 1795, was not published till 1842. Wordsworth offers some sort of apology for it, in mentioning certain crudenesses which would not have appeared in it had it been the work of a later period of his life, and remarks also that part of his object in writing it was to preserve in his distinct remembrance what he had observed of transition of character, and the reflections he had been led to make during the time he was a witness of the changes through which the French Revolution passed :—

'MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—I cannot suffer the morning of my birthday to pass without telling you that my heart is full of you and all that concerns you.

'Yesterday was lovely, and this morning is not less so. God grant that we may all have like sunshine in our hearts as long as we remain in this transient world.

'It is about half-past nine ; two hours hence we go to pay a condoling visit to poor Fanny. Mr. Carter, James and I all attended the funeral on Monday ; it was a beautiful afternoon, the light of the declining sun glowing upon Fairfield, as described in the Excursion, at Dawson's Funeral. The Psalm sung before

raising the coffin from its station before the Door, and afterwards, as the procession moved between the trees was most touching. Mr. Greenwood was there and told me the name (which I forget) of the composer, who lived 200 years ago. The music was worthy of the occasion and admirably given, the schoolmaster, a very respectable man, leading the four or five voices : upon these occasions the women do not sing, and I think that is well-judged, the sound being more grand and solemn, whatever it may lose in sweetness, by the want of female tones.

'After the funeral we walked to Mrs. Fletcher's, the place very tempting. They are expected on Saturday.

'I am pretty well, but far from having recovered the strength which I lost through several sleepless nights, the consequence of over, and ill-timed exertion to get the Volume out before Easter, in which attempt I failed. I am glad you like the tragedy. I was myself surprised to find the interest so kept up in the 4th and 5th acts. Of the third I never doubted, and quite agree with you that Herbert's speech is much the finest thing in the drama ; I mean the most moving, or rather, the most in that style of the pathetic which one loves to dwell upon ; though I acknowledge it is not so intensely dramatic as some parts of the 5th act especially.

'As to the first, my only fear was that the action was too far advanced in it. I think the scene where the Vagrant tells her false story has great merit ; it is thoroughly natural, and yet not commonplace nature.

'Some of the sentiments which the development of Oswald's character required will, I fear, be complained of as too depraved for anything but biographical writing.

'With affectionate remembrances to your husband and the girls,

'Ever yours,

'W. W.'

The exquisite lines descriptive of Dawson's funeral service to which he here alludes are to be found in the 'Churchyard among the Mountains,' one of the portions into which 'The Excursion' is divided. They tell of the burial of a peasant youth, to whom his comrades paid a soldier's honours, and, as they may not be fresh in the minds of all readers, I cannot refrain from quoting them :—

At his funeral hour
Bright was the sun, the sky a cloudless blue—
A golden lustre slept upon the hills ;

And if by chance a stranger wandering there,
 From some commanding eminence had looked
 Down on this spot, well pleased would he have seen
 A glittering spectacle ; but every face
 Was pallid : seldom has that eye been moist
 With tears, that wept not then : nor were the few,
 Who from their dwellings came not forth to join
 In this sad service, less disturbed than we.
 They started at the tributary peal
 Of instantaneous thunder which announced,
 Through the still air, the closing of the Grave ;
 And distant mountains echoed with a sound
 Of lamentation never heard before !

Here is another birthday letter, which may very properly follow the foregoing :—

‘7th April, 1840.

‘MY DEAREST DORA,—Though my left eye has been rather troublesome these two or three last days, I cannot forbear writing to you, and let the letter serve for dear Miss Fenwick also, upon the morning of my seventieth birthday.

‘I am, thank Almighty God ! in excellent health, and so is your dear Mother, and though some of my thoughts upon this occasion are naturally serious, even to sadness, I am, upon the whole, in a cheerful state of mind.

‘The day is bright as sunshine can make it, and the air fraught with as much stir and animating noise as the wind can put into it.

‘Your Mother finds her ancles weak from the shock and sprain of her fall and consequent confinement, or I should have tempted her out with me to walk on the terrace, from which I have had an entertaining view of the merriment of the servants, with help from Arthur Jackson and his brother, shaking the glittering dust out of the carpets.

‘Sister is very comfortable, and we are going on nicely, though wishing much for your return. Yesterday I dined with Mrs. Luff, after calling at the house high up Loughrigg side, where dwells the good woman who lost her two children in the flood last winter.

‘The wind was high when I knocked at her door, and I heard a voice from within that I knew not what to make of, though it sounded something like the lullaby of a Mother to her Baby. After entering, I found it came from a little sister of those drowned children, that was singing to a bunch of clouts rudely put together to look like a doll which I beheld in her arms.

‘I tell you this little story in order that, if it be perfectly convenient, but on no account else, you may purchase a thing that may answer the purpose with something more of pride and pleasure to this youngling of a nurse.

‘Such is your mother’s wish; I should not have had the wit to think of it. No matter, she says, how common a sort of thing the Doll is, only let it be a good big one.

‘Dear Miss Fenwick, Mrs. Luff does not wish to part with her sofas, but they are quite at your service, and she should be pleased you would use them, till she has a house of her own. But that time is, she fears, distant; her American property is so unpromising that she has scruples about taking Old Brathay. Now should she decline it, might it not, as the owner is willing to make some improvement, accommodate you for a time? I don’t much like the thought, but, as a *pis-aller*, it might possibly do until Mr. Hill may be tempted to give his cottage up.

‘I find from a talk with Mrs. Fleming, that they are disposed to make improvements could they let it for a term; and a term, with liberty, of course, to underlet, is what you want. But all this we long to talk over with you, among a thousand reasons for wishing you back again.

‘It had escaped my recollection when we heard about the woods and forests, and the Villars’ kindness, that I talked this matter over with Lord Lowther, when he was Surveyor of that department, and he told me there was scarcely a single office under him that was an object, at least *then* a come-at-able one.

‘Were he in England now, I should be inclined to ask him if my recollection be correct. But I must leave, which I do, dearest friends, with love to you both, and wishes for many happy returns of your own birthdays.

‘Ever most affectionately yours,

‘WM. WORDSWORTH.

‘Mrs. Pedder is putting up a new staircase in some part of the house for the convenience of her new tenant. Dearest Dora, your mother tells me she shrinks from copies being spread of those Sonnets; she does not wish one, at any rate, to be given to Miss Gillies, for that, without blame to Miss G., would be like advertising them. I assure you her modesty and humble mindness were so much shocked, that I doubt if she had more pleasure than pain from these compositions, though I never poured out anything more truly from the heart.’

The lines alluded to in the concluding words of this letter are probably those addressed to his wife, beginning—

Oh ! dearer far than light and life are dear,

for in the same poem he afterwards comments on her diffidence—

That sigh of thine, not meant for human ear,
Tells that these words thy humbleness offend, &c.

Yet the praise bestowed upon her strikes one as being founded mainly on her qualifications for being a sympathetic mate for himself, rather than on her individual merit. This is certainly his meaning with regard to her personal appearance :—

Heed not though none should call thee fair,
So, Mary, let it be,
If nought in loveliness compare
With what thou art to me, &c.

Mrs. Wordsworth, with all her beauty of expression, was undoubtedly a plain woman ; and this is what may be called putting the fact into plain language. But if she could make no boast of good looks, neither was the poet himself remarkable for beauty of feature, or comeliness of form ; while his extreme inattention to little matters of detail in dress was always more or less marked. I cannot forbear quoting an amusing incident lately told me by an old friend (a grand-niece of Mrs. Wordsworth), who, when a child in her parents' home at Durham, remembers one afternoon an announcement being made to her mother that a man wished to speak to her ; and that as he appeared very tired, and seemed to have walked a long distance, he had been accommodated with a seat in the kitchen. My friend's mother, like most country residents, was not unaccustomed to interviewing people of all sorts and conditions, and having finished the letter upon which she was engaged, proceeded leisurely to the kitchen, expecting perhaps some application for employment, or, possibly, to hear a tale of sickness or distress among her humbler neighbours. Her dismay may be imagined when, seated hat in hand upon a Windsor chair, and absently contemplating the weights of the Dutch clock upon the opposite wall, she discovered the Poet Laureate.

My informant, who was scarcely of an age to appreciate the beauty of the poet's conversation, confesses to an industrious though fruitless attempt on her part to count the number of buttons missing from the distinguished visitor's gaiters on this interesting occasion.

The following letter, addressed to his wife and daughter jointly,

is valuable from the mention, or rather the criticism, of the very well-known poem dedicated to Edith Southey, Sara Coleridge, and Dora Wordsworth, and entitled *The Triad*. In this letter, however, Wordsworth calls it *The Promise*. The stanzas here given are quoted in full, because they differ very materially from the printed version, and it is extremely interesting to compare them.

Thursday.

‘DEAREST M. and D.—From what I learn Mrs. Gee is left in such narrow circumstances that on that account alone it will be better not to stay more than three weeks with her at —.

‘I could wish to assist Mrs. Gee, tell her, in disposing of her portion of the Langdale Estate, but you are aware that no complete title can be made to it till little Mary M. is of age, so that I fear it will be almost an insurmountable objection. I will try. I shall be hurt if you do not so contrive as to spend at least a month at Cambridge with Dr. W. It is not necessary that I should be there to meet you, I will follow as soon as I can. . . . John arrived day before yesterday, looking well and apparently in good spirits. Bills to the amount of upwards of £60, including the one paid by Mr. Jackson, have been sent for Battles, the Taylor’s bill not included. Seven pounds for a new suit was also left at Cambridge, so that with use of furniture and John’s journey and settling, &c., the expenses on John’s account will be very formidable.

‘This was my main inducement for closing with Mr. Reynold’s offer for the Keepsake. I have already written all that will be necessary to fulfill my engagement, but I wish to write a small narrative poem by way of variety, in which case I shall defer something of what is already written till another year, if we agree.

‘I have written one little piece, 34 lines, on the Picture of a beautiful Peasant-Girl bearing a sheaf of corn. The person I had in my mind lives near the Blue Bell, Fillingham—a sweet creature : we saw her going to Hereford.

‘Another piece, 82 lines, same Stanza as Ruth, is entitled The Wishing-Gate at Grasmere. Both have, I think, merit. . . .

‘Wm. continues in good spirits and sufficiently industrious. Say to Mr. Monkhouse C. Wilson’s behaviour shews the good sense of Dr. Venables’ advice.

‘Have nothing to do with Quillinan. I am sorry for his disappointment. I hope dear Dora’s looks are better, and that she

will collect some flesh as Edith did. I will add for her a few additional lines for *The Promise*, that is the title of the poem. After "Where grandeur is unknown," add—

What living man would fear
The worst of Fortune's malice, wert thou near,
Humbling that lilly-branch, thy sceptre meek,
To brush from off his cheek
The too, too happy tear?
Queen and handmaid lowly! &c.

Before "Next to these shades a Nymph" &c., read this:—

Like notes of Birds that after showers
In April concert try their powers,
And with a tumult and a rout
Of warbling, force coy Phœbus out;
Or bid some dark cloud's bosom show
That form divine, the many coloured Bow.
E'en so the thrillings of the Lyre
Prevail to further our desire,
While to these shades a Nymph I call,
The youngest of the lovely three:
With glowing cheeks from pastimes virginal
Behold her hastening to the tents
Of nature, and the lonely elements!
And, as if wishful to disarm
Or to repay the tuneful charm,
She bears the stringed lute of old Romance, &c.

For "With the *happy* Rose enwreathed," on account of the "happy tears" above, read 'With *Idalian* rose.'

Read thus:—

Only ministers to quicken
Sallies of instinctive wit;
Unchecked in laughter-loving gaiety
In all the motions of her spirit free.

After that lovely line, "How light her air, her delicate glee!" the word "glee" ought not to occur again.

'Farewell, dearest loves. I have shown the above additions to nobody, even in this house; so I shall shut up my letter that neither it nor they may be read. Love to all at both houses. Again farewell.

'Your affectionate husband and father,
'W. W.'

The 'Dr. W.' alluded to in the earlier part of the foregoing letter was the poet's younger brother, and the father of the late Bishop of St. Andrews, whose reminiscences have recently been

published. Mrs. Gee, whose name appears frequently in the letters, had at one time a school at Hendon, Dora Wordsworth being one of her pupils.

The marriage of their only daughter, Dora, was a severe trial to the poet and his wife. Mr. Quillinan, of Portuguese extraction, and himself a poet of some pretension, was a widower with two little girls. His first wife was the daughter of Sir Egerton Brydges (of whom Carlyle says, 'he has a small vein of real worth in him, and knows several things'), and he must have been considerably older than Dora; but the main objection advanced by her parents to the marriage was on the grounds of his being a Roman Catholic.

Among the papers are two short letters touching this subject, which are here transcribed. It will be seen that notwithstanding the fatherly affection conveyed in them, there exists also a strong current of objection underlying and qualifying his expressions of satisfaction.

'Sunday morning, Nine o'clock.

'MY DEAREST DORA,—I am looking for Mr. Quillinan every moment. I hope to revive the conversation of yesterday.

'The sum is:—I make no opposition to this marriage. I have no resentment connected with it towards anyone; you know how much friendship I have always felt towards Mr. Q., and how much I respect him. I do not doubt the strength of his love and affection towards you: this, as far as I am concerned, is the fair side of the case.

'On the other hand, I cannot think of parting with you with that complacency, that satisfaction, that hopefulness which I could wish to feel: there is too much of necessity in the case for my wishes. But I must submit, and do submit; and God Almighty bless you, my dear child, and him who is the object of your long, and long-tried preference and choice.

'Ever your affectionate father,

'WM. WORDSWORTH.

'I have said little above of your dear mother, the best of women. O how my heart is yearning towards her, and you, and my poor dear sister.

'My ankle is rather worse this morning than yesterday at this time. Would that the next week were fairly over!

'I enjoyed the Ballet of the Opera last night.'

‘Thursday.

‘Your letter to me just received. Thanks: I will write from Brinsop—W. W.

‘MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—The letter which you must have received from Wm. has placed before you my judgment and feelings: how far you are reconciled to them I am unable to divine. I have only to add that I believe Mr. Q. to be a most honourable and upright man, and further, that he is most strongly and faithfully attached to you: this I must solemnly declare in justice to you both; and to this I add *my blessing upon you and him*—more I cannot do, and if this does not content you with what your brother has said, we must all abide by God’s decision upon our respective fates. Mr. Q. is, I trust, aware how slender my means are; the state of Wm.’s health will undoubtedly entail upon us considerable expense, and how John is to get on without our aid, I cannot foresee. No more at present, my time is out; I am going to join Miss Fenwick at Miss Pollard’s.

‘Ever your most tender-hearted and affectionate father,

‘WM. WORDSWORTH.

‘In a beautiful churchyard near Bath I saw, the other day, this inscription:—

THOMAS CARROL, Esq.,

BARRISTER AT LAW

Born—so, died—so,

Rest in peace, dear Father.

‘There was not another word.’

One can hardly avoid commenting on the curiously irrelevant nature of the postscripts appended to these two letters, called forth by a circumstance so near to the father’s heart, and presumably written under high pressure. That in the former, especially, referring to the Ballet at the Opera, strikes one as being particularly out of keeping with the feeling of the few lines above it. Evidently the ‘Order of Things,’ upon which Oliver Wendell Holmes so frequently insists, had little place in the poet’s mind, a noticeable fact, not only in this, but in many other instances, where his want of a certain sense of congruity now and then occurs to us.

Some of the early letters from Wordsworth to Quillinan are extremely friendly; they were evidently written before the latter had presented himself definitely in the light of a future son-in-law to his mind. The allusion to his ‘disappointment,’ in a letter

already quoted, coupled with the recommendation to his wife and daughter to have 'nothing to do with Quillinan,' was probably occasioned by one of Dora's repeated refusals of his suit.

But it is to be presumed that the Wordsworths, although not desirous of connecting themselves by marriage with the Quillinan family, always took an intimate and kindly interest in the children.

Mrs. Quillinan's tragic end (she died from shock to the system, consequent on a narrow escape from death by burning) would naturally dispose them to look with a friendly and compassionate eye upon her motherless children, and especially on the forlorn little baby; to whom Wordsworth, notwithstanding the difference in creed, was induced to stand godfather, and whom he called Rotha after the beautiful river Rotha, whose banks he loved so well.

It was not for some considerable time, however, that Dora consented to become Mr. Quillinan's wife, and she died a victim to consumption, only a very few years after her marriage.

The following letter addressed to Mr. Quillinan is a compound one, half of the sheet being written by Wordsworth, and the rest covered in large text-hand by little Rotha, whom he had just escorted from her home to spend a time with the family at Rydal Mount.

Miss Sara Hutchinson, the poet's sister-in-law, comments on this visit in a letter also lying before me: she mentions how the poet during the drive, becoming suddenly impressed with his responsibilities, asks the little one to repeat aloud with him the Lord's Prayer. 'Rotha,' to quote from Miss Hutchinson, 'was conscious that there was something ridiculous in their so doing in such a situation,' and though complying with the request in duty bound, hastily tacks on to the closing words of the Prayer a fervent 'I hope the Driver didn't hear us!' which seems to have given rise to much amusement all round, excepting to the poet himself; he, good man, apparently seeing nothing whatever incongruous in his innocent suggestion.

The child's letter (to her little sister *Jemima*) is far too pretty to be omitted. The orthography and construction are apparently all her own.

'April 29th, 1831.

'MY DEAR MIMA,—I got to rydal on thur about 7 o'clock. it is such a pretty place. I am sorry to say mrs. Wordsworth has got the lumbago very bad. there is a picture of you in my room with little flora and I think it is like you. there is a picture of

papa too but I do not think it is much like him tell Eliza I have bought the doll it has light hair and blue eyes and also give my love to her. The students at cambridge have such funy caps and gowns I went one Sunday Trinity college chapel and all of the students wear surprises I dont know wether I have spelt it right.

'Believe me to be your affectionate sister Rotha Quillinan there is such a larg dog called neptun almost as large as a calf, so If he jumped upon me he would most likely turn me over.'

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—I cannot suffer this letter to go without a word from me: and first of dear Mrs. Wordsworth—her complaint is lumbago and sciatica, the younger sister and scarcely distinguishable from tic-doulereux. But here my poetical reputation served us. I knew no one in Nottingham, but bethought me of the Howitts. There are two brothers of them—on one I called to state my situation, and found that there was a third Brother, a Physician. Him I sent for, and Wm. and Mary Howitt insisted on the invalid being brought to their house, which was a great comfort on the eve of an Election. We made one attempt to move her in vain, in the afternoon we succeeded, and she passed through the wide Market-place of Nottingham, wrapped in a blanket (she could not be dressed), and in a chair, followed by a 100 boys and curious persons. So that she preceded Sir Thomas Denham and Ferguson in the honour of being chaired, and was called by us Parliament Woman for the loyal Borough of Nottingham.

'As to Rotha she is a sweet, clever child, and we were the best companions in the world. As Miss H. says, we must take care not to spoil her; she is wonderfully intelligent.

'God bless you. I am called away.

'Ever faithfully and gratefully yours,

'W. WORDSWORTH.

'Love to Jemima.'

This little incident of Mrs. Wordsworth's illness and removal to the Howitts' house is duly recorded also in Mary Howitt's pleasant autobiography. She speaks of the year 1831 as 'a memorable one' to her, by reason of the Wordsworths' visit, but we will give it in her own words. 'This day week,' she writes in her diary, 'as we were dressing in the morning, Mr. Wordsworth was announced. He was on his way from London,

and Mrs. Wordsworth, who was with him, was taken ill on the road, and had arrived in great agony in Nottingham, the night before. He came, poor man, in much perplexity to ask our advice. We recommended that Godfrey should see her, and insisted on her removal to our house, which was accomplished with some difficulty the same afternoon. Here she has accordingly been since: she is now nearly recovered. Wordsworth greatly pleased me. He is worthy of being the author of *The Excursion* and *Ruth*, and those sweet poems of human sympathy. Not less are we pleased with Mrs. Wordsworth and her lovely daughter, Dora.

‘They are the most grateful people: everything we do for them is right, and the very best it can be.’

In a letter which is published in *The Memoirs*, we find the poet stating that he ‘derived benefit from Mr. Quillinan’s help and judgment;’ and from the correspondence now under our notice, it would appear that there was a frequent interchange between the friends, of criticism on their respective productions. The sub-joined extract of a letter to Mr. Quillinan evidently refers to some work of the latter’s submitted for the poet’s inspection, and apparently accompanied by a request for a candid opinion upon its merits.

His comments upon it are here transcribed at length, because it is interesting to observe the exact shade of meaning which, by his own showing, certain words conveyed to the poet’s mind; and his friendly criticism of Mr. Quillinan’s verse helps us, moreover, to form an idea of the careful and minute study he probably bestowed upon his own composition before sending it to the press, in order to ensure the entire suitability of every word to the expression of his thought. This is the more noteworthy because Wordsworth has been accused by more than one critic, of a certain blunt carelessness in penning down his first crude impressions, without taking sufficient trouble to adapt them to the exigences of verse.

Unfortunately the subject criticised is not within our reach, but we can easily dispense with it in the light of the very comprehensive comments made by its critic, and the thoroughly clear manner in which he makes his meaning evident.

‘We have read your verses,’ he says, ‘with much pleasure; they want neither eye nor feeling, and are upon the whole, which is saying a great deal, worthy of the subject. But the expression

is here and there faulty, as I am pretty sure you must be yourself aware.

“Piles” ought to be *pile*, but “aisles,” a necessary word, has caused a sacrifice to rhyme. “Exstatic” is a word not too strong perhaps though referring to stone, considered apart from the human heart, but coupled with it thus it strikes me as being so.

‘To “conscious pillars” I should have preferred an epithet addressed to the sight, and appropriate to architecture. I should like *chequered* better than “mottled,” which is a word almost always used in unfavourable or mean sense—as mottled with measles, mottled soap, &c.

“By her *sculpture*” seems too strong a word for the touch of the moon; and “flecked,” as far as I am acquainted with the word, applies to spots on the surface having reference to shade or colour, and not to incision.

‘The primary sense—that most frequently used—of the word *anatomy*, being the art or act of dissection, causes some obscurity or confusion joined with the phrase of what he was, which might be avoided, though perhaps with some loss of force, if it was not for the confusion, by altering the passage thus:—

“His grim anatomy

So fall the rays *shed by the moon*, that in their silent strife,”
or *from the clear moon*.

‘A better epithet might be found than “*swelling* with richness bland.”

‘You must be well aware that this is the worst line in the poem. All the rest is beautiful in feeling, as it is faultless in expression.’

Besides such friendly criticisms as the above, there occur in the letters frequent mentions of mutual acquaintances and friends—of ‘dear Southey,’ his troubles and misfortunes, ‘thorns in his side not of his own planting’; and here and there some touching allusions to Hartley Coleridge, of whom the same cannot be said.

‘He’ (the latter) ‘is wandering about like a vagabond, sleeping in barns, without the dignity of gypsy life, and picking up a meal where he can, in and about Ambleside.’

This sad subject evidently stirred him most deeply; and the manner in which he occasionally alludes to it recalls to mind Harriet Martineau’s description of his tender, loving treatment of his unfortunate friend.

‘As long as there was any chance of good from remonstrance and rebuke,’ writes Miss Martineau, ‘Wordsworth administered both sternly and faithfully; but when nothing more than pity and help was possible, Wordsworth treated him as gently as if he had been a sick child.’

This devotion and pitying care for the hapless being he had once called friend, call forth our warmest admiration; more especially when we take into consideration certain strong prejudices of his nature, which must have caused him to shrink painfully from anything so degraded as Hartley Coleridge had become. Yet he ministered to him unceasingly during the latter days of his life; devotedly tending him in his last illness, and faithfully accompanying him to that grave, in the little churchyard among the mountains, close by the spot where his own remains are now resting.

One cannot but recall the pathetic little poem ‘to H. C., aged 6 years,’ and wonder whether its closing lines had place in his mind that day, as he bowed his aged head over poor Hartley’s coffin:—

What hast thou to do with sorrow,
Or the injuries of to-morrow?
Thou art a dew-drop which the morn brings forth;
I’ll fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;
A gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives,
But at the touch of wrong, without a strife,
Slips in a moment out of life.

From the following extract from another letter to Quillinan, the reader may be interested in learning that the bitter cry of the author against the publisher might have been heard in the land even in Wordsworth’s day, who very plainly puts forth his views on this point and also on the copyright question, apparently then, as now, a burning subject for discussion. Possibly some public reform in this matter was under contemplation when the lines were penned.

‘I do not acknowledge the force of the objections made to my publishing the specimens of Chaucer, nevertheless I have yielded to the judgments of others, and have not sent more than the *Cuckoo and Nightingale*.

‘Tegg is what you say. He has written two long and stupid letters to the *Times*, in one of which the blockhead says, “Look at the profits, the enormous ones of such and such people——”

‘The large and increasing instant demand for literature of a certain quality holds out the strongest temptation to men who could do better, writing below themselves to suit the taste of the superficial many. What we want is not books to catch purchasers themselves not worth a moment’s notice, not light but solid matter, not things treated in a broad and coarse, or, at best, a superficial way, but profound or refined works comprehensive of human interests through time as well as space. Kotzebue was acted and read at once from Cadiz to Moscow; what has become of him now?’

‘But Tegg has the impudence to affirm that another *Paradise Lost*, or a poem as good, would at once produce 10,000*l.* from Mr. Murray and others. *Credat Judæus Apella*. *Paradise Lost* is indeed bought because people for their own credit must now have it. But how few, how very few read it; when it is read by the multitude, it is almost exclusively not as a poem, but a religious book.

‘But even were it true that substantial work would at once secure a wide circulation, justice would still be violated by withholding from the descendants or heirs of a great author the further advantage he is so strongly entitled to. The wretch Tegg says his “line is to watch expiring copyrights;” and would be no doubt, if he dared, to murder the authors for the sake of getting sooner at his prey. But too much of this disgusting subject.’

It seems that the poet, with all his habitual gentleness and mildness of manner, had nevertheless some strong opinions of his own on certain matters, and lacked not the courage on occasions to speak his mind. Here is an amusing reference to Chauncey Hare Townsend, an unorthodox parson of the day, whose literary remains, by the way, were afterwards gathered together and edited by Charles Dickens. The reverend gentleman has somehow or other fallen under the ban of his displeasure, in part, we gather, on account of some comment or criticism on Wordsworth’s composition, not too politely expressed.

‘The Rev. Chauncey Hare Townsend,’ he writes, ‘is as pretty a rascal as ever put on a surplice. He is one of Southey’s most intimate friends, and has been so for about a dozen or fourteen years, during a good part of which period I have occasionally seen him on very friendly terms, both at Cambridge where I have dined with him, and at my own house where he has slept and where he

was cordially received twice, while this attack upon my person and writing was in process.

'The thing, as an intellectual production, is safe in its own vileness. Who that ever felt a line of my poetry would trouble himself to crush a miserable maggot crawled out of the dead carcass of the *Edinburgh Review*? But too much of this.'

He also indulges not infrequently in caustic remarks on women who write, towards whom he always retained a rooted objection. It is said that after Miss Martineau took up her residence in his neighbourhood, this abhorrence to authoresses sometimes took such active expression that the deaf lady was frequently obliged to *see* what she could not *hear*, and perforce, to recognise that her presence was unwelcome at Rydal Mount. She herself, however, makes no mention of anything of the kind, when alluding to the Wordsworths, and her intercourse with them.

On one occasion, after unsparingly condemning a work by Miss Sedgwick, he concludes his criticism thus: 'Such productions add to my dislike of Literary Ladies—indeed make me almost detest the name.' And further on again I find the rather sweeping announcement that 'blue stockinism is sadly at enmity with true refinement of mind.' This last is said in reference to Sara Coleridge, whom he rather pettishly accuses of monopolising Mr. Quillinan's attention on one occasion, during the time of the latter's engagement to his daughter Dora. Perhaps, as the remark is made in a letter to Quillinan himself, something in the nature of a tacit reproof may be included in it for him also.

That Wordsworth entertained a high ideal of womanhood in the abstract is undoubted, and is evident in most of his poetry; but it is equally true that he could ill support contradiction or interference from the ladies of his own family, from whom, by the way, he was likely to meet with very little of either. He was lord paramount in his home; the central figure of a group of devoted and faithful admirers, who could see no flaw in anything he said or did. His sister and his sister-in-law resided constantly with them, joining wife and daughter in one invariable chant of praise of his great gifts, and veneration for his genius.

Under such circumstances who could wonder at the growing weakness for universal approbation which is said to have beset, in his latter days, the grand old Lake poet?

Doubtless also the ubiquitous British tourist, who still stalks

the earth dealing out desolation wherever he penetrates, has much to answer for from his pernicious custom of hunting down celebrities with unceasing incursions on their privacy.

When reviewing the lives of most men of mark we are generally able to observe that one particular period in their career will stand out in brilliant relief to the rest: we can, as a rule, point unmistakably to the rise, the climax, and the subsidence of power in the rather rare instances of longevity in connection with genius.

In Wordsworth's case the zenith of his poetical inspiration was concentrated into a remarkably short space of time; and he was doubtless painfully aware, in the closing years of his long life, of his inability to reach his own earlier standard. In some of these very letters there is abundant evidence that such was the case. *Non sum qualis eram* is the pathetic burden of several of them. It may be that a natural anxiety to make the most of the high reputation he had so justly won, and of the waning of which he may have been unhappily conscious, resulted, in his old age, in a tenacious craving for outward and visible signs of that sort of popularity which, in former days, he had probably regarded with indifference.

However this may be, a fitting conclusion to these suggestions may be found in one more quotation of his own words, arising from the consideration of the praises bestowed upon great and good men:—

‘The noblest of mankind,’ he observes, ‘have been found, when intimately known, to be of characters so imperfect that no eulogist can find a subject which he will venture upon with the animation necessary to create sympathy, unless he confines himself to a particular art, or he takes something of a one-sided view of the person he is disposed to celebrate.’

‘This,’ he adds, ‘is a melancholy truth.’

USEFUL PEOPLE.

It is satisfactory to know that hunger, thirst, and cold, as well as other groups in the great family of pain, are the first and greatest teachers of mankind. Without them we should have been eating acorns, chipping flints, and making ourselves as comfortable as might be in the company of other 'species.' We are fortunate in learning this, for it gives a colour to the accepted saying that 'there is a use for everything.' Probably our test has been its fitness to our own convenience and taste. Thus, though the sting of a bee and a wasp is equally painful, we destroy the nests of the one, and tax our ingenuity in constructing the most commodious hives for the other. Veal, jelly, and sweetbread commend the calf (from head to heel) on its way towards the production of beef, butter, milk, and cheese, to say nothing of hide. Otherwise, mere picturesqueness would hardly have led to the careful preservation of cows on the alp and in the meadow. Lions and tigers, too, provide pleasure for the moneyed sportsman, as well as hearth-rugs, and instructive entertainment at the Zoo. To their black fellow-countrymen these beasts are less attractive. It may be interesting, moreover, to read about herds of wild horses; but the adjunct of harness presents them in a different light. Though Darwin has revealed their intelligence, and shown the part they play in renovating the face of the earth, we have been accustomed to value 'worms' only as bait. . . . their worth as such being seen from another point of view by themselves. It may be difficult, indeed, to realise the usefulness of much in the 'world of insignificance,' as with grubs which destroy our crops, and mosquitoes, especially when these show (so travellers tell us) like a mist over the prairie, and a man has only to clap his hands if he wishes to kill a hundred; still, in the case, say, of the 'turnip fly,' the most tiresome insect helps in the development of agricultural ingenuity, and takes its place along with hunger and thirst, heat and cold, in making 'Man' bethink and bestir himself. Without a host of disagreeable incentives the rise of civilisation would have been unknown.

Manifold other factors enter the question when we begin to

talk about 'useful people,' and ask ourselves when and how anyone can claim a right to this gratifying prefix. It is hard to find an obviously suitable entrance into so complex a problem, and impossible to define in a few words a thing which presents so many sides as 'usefulness.'

In the first place, it must be admitted that some eminently 'useful' people are anything but agreeable. Think of the 'wet blanket.' It would be difficult to overvalue the good which he frequently does. We concoct promising schemes, and, in all honesty, are persuaded that they are sure to be effective. But (in the heat of pleasurable creation) something has been overlooked, some condition essential to success has been forgotten. Who shall bell the cat? The mice look at one another in dismay. Many people have exhausted themselves in efforts to discover 'perpetual motion,' which would, presumably, be of use if realised. I knew an old gentleman in a country village who bewildered Hodge by the importation of huge costly iron cylinders, levers, and cranks which were to revolutionise the world of practical science. One receptacle, at last, came to be used as a water tank; another eventually served the purpose of a pig-trough. All the would-be inventor's time and money might have been saved if only some provoking friend had first made him try whether he could carry himself in a basket. The floor of the world is strewn with vexatious failures which only wanted the early application of a wet blanket to check the expenditure of useless pains.

I might give a long list of these dampers if I did not believe that none of my readers are ignorant of what they feel like, whether used in the checking of some widely ambitious project, or applied in the privacy of an affectionate home. The best of wives always keep a supply of cooling house-cloths, and (with unexpected skill) know how to clap them on when questionable proposals are laid upon the family table.

I need not say that many 'useful people' whose help we foresee, and even invite, but which brings no inevitable pleasure, are often seen in the shape of teachers. Their object, indeed, is not to damp but encourage us; and yet sometimes we are conscious of unpleasant inferiority when we employ them. I am not thinking of the undefined aversion of the schoolboy for Dr. Fell; but though we may sincerely desire instruction, the sense of ignorance which accompanies a request for advice is not always agreeable, especially if we are unable to get it without payment. The pro-

spect of relief from personal pain, or the hope that we may obtain it for another, causes the physician to be looked upon as a welcome friend; but we seldom have the same feeling towards a 'vet.' when a favourite horse has broken its knees, or a stupid cow has tried to swallow a turnip the wrong way. And we do not invariably enter the consulting-room of our 'legal adviser' with a conviction that his 'usefulness' is enjoyable. From the pitiless 'wet blanket' who is allied to those inexorably corrective powers of Nature which educate mankind, to the mildest of instructors who almost apologise for their superior knowledge, there is a procession of 'useful people' whose help we are compelled to accept against the grain, or wish we could manage to do without.

A word about unconscious usefulness. There are simple people who by their persistency serve as warnings against foolishness. This is sometimes allied with vanity, and an example will serve to illustrate what I mean. Take hair-dye. I fear that many, men as well as women, would disguise their white heads if they could be really disguised. It is not for want of invitations that they fail to try, and it must be assumed that hair-dressers find a sufficient response to their advertisements or they would cease to appear. But their resultant ghastliness must ensure the survival of many a grey head which otherwise might have been silly enough to hide itself.

Beside unconsciously useful people there are those who are only too conscious of the use they are put to, and who are distinctly unwilling to be so employed. A man is hanged, for instance, chiefly as a warning to others. He might be kept from further mischief by less final means, and the nature of his punishment prohibits it from being a monition to himself. Jails, too, may be said to make their tenants 'useful' as examples, however reluctant to be so utilised. All conspicuous evil-doers, indeed, though not criminal, serve in some measure to deter the thoughtless when their evil deeds are offensive to others, or seen to be injurious to themselves. The classical precedent of making slaves drunk (probably without aversion on their part) as a dissuasive spectacle for the sober, could hardly be followed now without unpleasant criticism by the Temperance newspapers; but, in fact, compulsion is unhappily needless, since a drunkard is always a warning (however frequently futile), though it is only by a stretch of language that he can be included in the list of 'useful people.'

If we turn to a pleasanter examination of it, a high place must be given to the 'pioneer,' though his 'usefulness' is often not realised except by himself, and he has to be content with the applause of his own conscience. Though it sometimes even puts him to death for his pains, the world would stand still if it were not for his precocity and perseverance. Even when a 'leader' questions no social custom, and advocates no fresh aspect of a creed, when he proposes something which openly commends itself, the world (especially that which is called learned and scientific) carefully guards itself against any suspicion of approval. Just a hundred years ago (in 1792) an inventive English nobleman declared that it was possible to make a ship move by the aid of 'steam,' without 'masts or sails,' and, having spent as much as he was prepared to afford on repeated costly plans, craved some assistance from the State. Of course the department (being a wet blanket) stringently tied up its loan, but, having become persuaded by the result of his experiments that he had hope of success, it undertook to build a small vessel for the would-be inventor, to be navigated 'by the steam engine' on the condition that if it failed 'all the expense should be made good by him.' This generous enterprise of Lord Stanhope was highly lauded at the time, the popular verdict being thus expressed, 'If it answer, the advantage to the public, particularly in inland navigation, will be immense.' In this case the recognition of a pioneer's possible 'usefulness' was exceptionably favourable. If the Inquisition had then held power in England his ignoring of the mystic wind's influence might have got him into mischief. But the courage of the true discoverer seldom fails. When Galileo was compelled to recant his heresy about the motion of the earth he whispered to a friend, as he rose from his knees, 'It moves for all that.' So, too, at last does the cautious world when some one audaciously proposes to find his way over a stream or gulf which has never been crossed, or about even the existence of which none have ever troubled themselves at all. Your suggestive explorer, nevertheless, affirms that there is something worth knowing or having on the other side. Nobody cares a button for what he says. So he quietly carries a plank of his own to the brink. It is too short, or carried away. At last (if he is not drowned himself) he finds one the right length and lays it firmly down. He toddles carefully over. 'Look at that fool,' says the public. But he comes back, declaring that there is something of value on the other

side, and makes several passages, bringing specimens. Presently an inquiring friend makes a trip with him, then another, and another. . . . until in time the sneering world drives up with its cartloads of bricks and timber to build a bridge, because there really is a gold mine on the opposite shore. Pioneers head the regiment of 'useful people,' though the column seldom follows close at their heels.

Perhaps one of the most valuable items in a hide-bound society is the man who lifts its wheels out of some hateful rut which all have been afraid to leave. Why afraid? Nobody knows. So he whips his horses, gets clear, and a grateful company makes new tracks upon the road. The leaders of fashion, it must be confessed, sometimes take a wrong turn and drive beauty itself into bondage; but the pioneer (whether man or woman) who, e.g., struck off its hoops may claim to be counted among useful people. There are now, too, professed candidates for that honour, though as yet they have not persuaded ladies that the sweeping of the 'side-walk' is more the business of the vestry than of the dressmaker.

What is to be said about those who, unquestionably, burn with desire to benefit their fellows, but whose zeal takes shape in the preaching of some 'fad'? There are, for instance, vegetarians who, not content with protesting against the use of 'flesh-meat' on physiological grounds, or objecting to the association of an innocent lamb with mint sauce, boldly urge that it wholly fulfils its purpose when viewed as a 'pet,' and would protect it even from the shears, because there are 'vegetable fibres' better suited for the knitting of stockings than 'lamb's-wool.' No doubt many people eat too much meat, and he would be a useful man in his generation who was able to make them believe this; but it is in the nature of a 'faddist' to spoil his usefulness by not knowing when to stop. He will not see that plenty of sensible men are provoked at so much good stuff in the way of zeal running to waste. Some wiseacres say, I know that 'the higher you aim the further you shoot,' but (let alone the fact that the highest must needs result in the arrow coming down, perhaps on your head, like a rocket stick) there is such a thing as 'precision' wanted for hitting a mark, and a tub is not a bit the fuller because the water runs over the brim.

Many men (by the way) have been perplexed how to make a 'faddist' useful, or at least how to qualify the violence of his

zeal. Let me advise. If you are associated with one, say on a committee, in the promotion of some desirable end, never contend with him. Admit to the full the excellence of the object in view; let him blow off his steam and make the most exasperating and drastic proposals, and then (while he is limp from the exhaustion of his eloquence) move an amendment aiming at the 'result' which he desires. He may possibly think that he has convinced you. Anyhow, you will have a seconder, and the silent thanks of your colleagues. If, unhappily, you find yourself joined with him in double harness, or if one who should be your subordinate runs wild, sever the connection as soon as you can. There is no reason why such small power for usefulness as you may possess yourself should be frustrated by his folly.

It is a long stride from the man who is overdone with anxiety to improve others, and would always set a neighbour's clock by his own watch, to those whose claim to utility is little more than pictorial. We often see 'useful ornaments' advertised for sale, and, when it is equally serviceable, we always prefer a handsome well-shaped article to an ugly one. There are, however, different notions of what is becoming, and I, for one, would rather have an honest copper coal-scuttle show its contents in my drawing-room than a Japan casket, painted perhaps with Cupids and roses, the lid of which always fell upon my scoop when I wanted to feed the fire. But that is not the point. Beauty and usefulness may well meet together. We must admit the claims of those, too, who, having done their work, and done it well, can unbuckle their belts without blame. There is no special merit in a determination to 'die in harness.' On the contrary, such a resolve may be most inconvenient to the rest of the team, who would gladly turn the old prig into a paddock. He spoils the pace, and does not pull his weight. They manage these things without appeal in the army. Youth is the time for fighting, and when I see an 'old soldier' covered with medals I have to resist an ungallant thought that he has been well drilled in—I think they call it 'finding cover.' No doubt it is mortifying for him when an officer, well instructed, sound in wind and limb, eager for active service, and, indeed, fit so to serve, is put on the shelf because he has reached an inexorable birthday; but, after all, military procedure is a lesson on the limits of usefulness which might be followed in other professions, not excluding the legislative and clerical. Anyhow, it is no necessary symptom of idleness in a people when

we see experienced old men 'standing at ease,' and perhaps giving themselves no more trouble than to order their dinners. There are rooms in the 'Rag' which the young bloods of that military Club have the irreverence to call 'dormitories.' Those who thus use them have earned their sleep.

But when we talk about 'useful people' what shall be said of such as have been through no campaign, never smelt powder, except in the form of snuff, and whose lack of usefulness has never been disguised by the possession of beauty? Some town idlers (and country too) have, no doubt, been of service in carrying the pollen of acceptable news and pleasant amenities from one social flower to another, and they have been by no means selfish in so doing. They have contributed much that is agreeably valuable to their neighbours, and thus must not be excluded from a place in the list of 'useful people.' But your sheer dawdler, who thinks only about himself, and the cultivation of his vanishing appetites and passions, and has never really cared for anything else, may serve as—well—an example of the polish which worthless humanity is capable of taking.

There is a large class of people, however, whose usefulness is only passive. They take no active part in doing good to their generation, though they may be, and often are, held in much esteem by those around them. Probably this comes from their harmlessness—from their making no stir, and never giving utterance to troublesome suggestions. They take things as they are, and when these suit the views of their neighbours, they get credit as benefactors to their race. I am thinking of men with adequate means who live in the same place year after year, and have an appreciable number of others 'dependent' upon them, such as tenants, bailiffs, gamekeepers, small tradesmen, peasants, and a wagging tail of promiscuous 'hangers-on.' A man in this position, of easy-going temper, who finds employment for those about him, likes the character of being ready to do a kindness, and is too good-natured to mind being sometimes a little imposed upon, is sure to be reckoned among 'useful people.' And he deserves a good name. He irritates no one by vexatious reforms in the routine of local procedure, but keeps a welcome level in the discharge of his inherited duties. Still, his unquestionable 'usefulness' is little else but that of a 'pump.' Not a steam one, under the sole control of its irresponsible proprietor, but an instrument of more value with those who have access to its handle.

The village carpenter, bricklayer, shopkeeper, baker, and tailor have hold of it in turn. It stands over the tank of the good man's resources and generosity. There is no denying its usefulness. All the same, it is a pump of the simplest construction. Probably it stood where it is before he was born, and when he shall be removed (if his son duly fills his place in the eyes of the community), it will be there still. We may, nevertheless, reasonably doubt whether the welfare of a country would be best secured if it were planted throughout with these laudable erections. Something more seems to be required of such as may most fitly be called 'useful people.'

What, asks my reader, could you have better, especially in these days of social anxiety, say, than a kind-hearted judicious landowner who keeps up the traditions of his place, and lives in the midst of a contented people? Ay, there is the rub. It does not follow that 'their' traditions are what 'they' would best like to be preserved, however steadily they go on touching their hats. Some kinds of 'contentment,' moreover, are unwholesome, if not deadly. There is small hope of people who never complain, and he is the really useful man who can discern the symptoms of popular unsettlement and meet its desire, not by a multiplication of old indulgences, or a fresh exercise of paternal responsibility, but by sympathetic 'leadership.' The days of local patronage are played out, and if any man wishes to 'look after' those around him, he must begin by 'looking forward.' He must be something more than a 'pump.' If he is merely willing to be 'used,' instead of being 'useful,' there is no fear, indeed, that his services will not be recognised; but they will be those of a tool rather than of a workman. No one denies the usefulness of a tool. Nevertheless, when we ask who are the useful 'people' in a generation, we look for something in them more than passive utility. They do not merely supply material for the discontented and ambitious to work upon or employ, but are leaders in giving shape to social desires and growth. All, indeed, cannot be these. The multitude must needs be led, and the value of what they say and do depends upon their being led right. Surely, then, the most 'useful' are those who best teach others what to think, and enable them best to realise that which they desire to be done for them, or to do themselves,

IN A CARAVAN.

'Which means, I think, that go or stay
Affects you nothing, either way.'

'AND that is where Parker sleeps.'

We craned our necks, and, stooping low, saw beneath the vehicle a parasitic square box like a huge barnacle fixed to the bottom of the van. A box about four feet by two. The door of it was open, and Parker's bedfellows—two iron buckets and a sack of potatoes—stood confessed.

'Oh, yes—very nice,' we murmured.

'Oh! it's awfully jolly,' said the host-in-himself.

We looked at Parker, who was peeling potatoes on the off-shaft—Parker, six feet two, with a soldier's bearing—and we drifted off into thought.

'And who drives?' we asked, with an intelligent interest.

'Oh, Parker. And we do all the rest, you know.'

It was seven o'clock in the evening when we joined the caravan, in a stackyard on the outskirts of an Eastern county town.

'That's 'im—that's Lord George Sanger,' was said of the writer by one of the crowd of small boys assembled at the stack-yard gate. A travelling menagerie and circus was advertised in a somewhat 'voyant' manner on the town walls, and a fancied resemblance to the aristocratic manager thereof accredited us with an honourable connection in the enterprise.

'When do you open?' inquired an intelligent spectator—*anxious to show savoir faire.*

'See small handbills,' replied the host-in-himself, with equal courtesy.

'Oo are yer, at any rate?' inquired an enlightened voter.

'Who are *you*?' we replied with spirit; and, passing through the gate, we closed it to keep out the draught. Then we paid a domiciliary visit, and were duly shown Parker's apartments.

In outward appearance the caravan suggested an overgrown bathing-machine. The interior resembled the cabin of a yacht. The walls were gaily decorated with painting on the panels; flowers bloomed in vases fixed upon the wall; two prettily

curtained windows—one a bay, the other flat—gave a view of the surrounding country. At the forward end, against the bulkhead, so to speak, was a small but enterprising chest of drawers, and above it a large looking-glass which folded down, developed legs, and owned to the soft impeachment of being a bed. Beneath the starboard window a low and capacious sofa, combining the capacity of a locker. Under the port window was fixed a table against the bulkhead, where four people could and did dine sumptuously. When *en voyage* and between meals, charts, maps, and literature littered this table pleasantly. A ship's clock hung over it, and a corner cupboard did its duty in the port quarter. A heavy plush curtain closed off the kitchen and pantry, which were roomy and of marvellous capacity. Then the back door—in halves—and the back steps, brass-bound, treacherous.

In front there was a little verandah with supporting columns of bamboo. Here we usually sat when travelling—Parker in the right-hand corner handling the ribbons of the tandem cart-horses with skill and discretion.

As dinner was not ready, we proceeded to pitch the small tent wherein the two men were to sleep. It was a singular tent, with a vast number of pendent ropes which became entangled at the outset. We began with zeal, but presently left the ropes and turned our attention to the pegs. These required driving in with a wooden mallet and a correct eye. Persons unaccustomed to such work strike the peg on one side—the mallet goes off at a tangent and strikes the striker with force upon the shin-bone.

Finally Parker said he would put up the tent 'by'n-by.'

There was a Bedlington terrier—Parker's dog—attached (literally) to the caravan. He was tied to one of the bamboo columns on the forecastle, and when Parker absented himself for long he usually leaped off the platform and sought death by strangulation—this we discovered later. When we abandoned the tent we thought we would cheer up the dog.

'Don't touch him, sir; he'll bite you,' said Parker.

Of course we touched him; no man who respects himself at all is ready to admit that a dog bites *him*. It was wonderful how that dog and Parker understood each other. But the bite was not serious.

At last dinner was ready, and we are prepared to take any horrid oath required that no professional cook could set before a king potatoes more mealy. This only, of all the items in the

menu, is mentioned, because where potatoes are good the experienced know that other things will never be amiss.

We waited on ourselves, and placed the dirty dishes, plates, and forks upon the back step, where Parker replaced them in a few minutes, clean.

'Oh!' exclaimed the hostess-in-herself, about ten p.m., when we were smoking the beatific pipe, 'By the way—Parker's dinner!'

In response to united shouts Parker appeared, and learned with apparent surprise that he had omitted to dine. He looked pale and worn, and told us that he had been blowing out the air-beds. At eleven o'clock we two men left the ladies and went out into the cold moonlight, where our tent looked remarkably picturesque. Of course we fell over a tent-peg each, and the host lost his watch-key. Parker came forward—dining—to explain where the ropes were, and fell over one himself, losing a piece of cold boiled beef in the grass. We hunted for it with a lucifer match. Its value was enhanced by the knowledge that when the bed was shut down and had developed its legs the larder was inaccessible. After some time Parker discovered that the dog had been let loose and had found the beef some moments before. He explained that it was a singular dog and preferred to live by dishonesty. Unstolen victuals had for him no zest. He added that the loss was of no consequence, as he never had been very keen on that piece of beef. We finally retired into the tent, and left Parker still at work completing several contracts he had undertaken to carry through 'by'n-by.' He said he preferred doing them over-night, as it was no good getting up *before* five on these dark autumnal mornings.

As an interior the tent was a decided success. We went inside and hooked the flap laboriously from top to bottom. Then we remembered that the host's pyjamas were outside. He undid two hooks only and attempted to effect a *sortie* through the resultant interstice. He stuck. The position was undignified and conducive to weak and futile laughter. At last Parker had to leave the washing-up of the saucepans to come to the rescue, while the dog barked and imagined that he was attending a burglary.

It was nearly midnight before we made our first acquaintance with an air-bed, and it took us until seven o'clock the next morning to get on to speaking terms with it. The air-bed, like the Bedlington terrier, must be approached with caution. Its manner is, to say the least of it, repellent. Unless the sleeper (save the

mark !) lies geometrically in the centre, the air rushes to one side and the ignorant roll off the other. If there were no bedclothes one could turn round easily, but the least movement throws the untucked blanket incontinently into space, while the instability of the bed precludes tucking in. Except for these and a few other drawbacks, the air-bed may safely be recommended.

The next morning showed a white frost on the grass, and washing in the open, in water that had stood all night in a bucket, was, to say the least of it, invigorating. Parker browned our boots, put a special edge of his own upon our razors, attended to the horses, oiled the wheels, fetched the milk, filled the lamps of the paraffin stove, bought a gallon of oil, and carried a can of water from a neighbouring farm before breakfast, just by way—he explained—of getting ready to start his day's work.

An early start had been projected, but owing to the fact that after breakfast Parker had to beat the carpet, wash the dishes, plates, cups and saucers, knives and forks, and his own face, strike the tent, let the air out of the air-beds, roll up the waterproof sheets, clean the saucepans, groom the horses, ship the shafts, send off a parcel from the station, buy two loaves of bread, and thank the owner of the stackyard—owing, I say, to the fact that Parker had these things to accomplish while we 'did the rest,' it was eleven o'clock before all hands were summoned to get 'her' out of the narrow gateway. This was safely accomplished, by Parker, while we walked round, looked knowingly at the wheels, sternly at the gate-posts, and covertly at the spectators.

Then we clambered up, the host-in-himself cracked the whip, Parker gathered up his reins.

'Come up, Squire! Come up, Nancy!'

And the joy of the caravaneer was ours.

This joy is not like the joy of other men. For the high-road, the hedgerows, the birds, the changing sky, the ever-varying landscape, belong to the caravaneer. He sits in his moving home and is saturated with the freedom of the gipsy without the haunting memory of the police, which sits like Care on the roof of the gipsy van. Book on lap, he luxuriates on the forecastle when the sun shines and the breeze blows soft, noting idly the passing beauty of the scene, returning peaceably to the printed page. When rain comes, as it sometimes does in an English summer, he goes inside and gives a deeper attention to the book, while Parker drives and gets wet. Getting wet is one of Parker's duties. And

through rain and sunshine he moves on ever, through the peaceful and never dull—the incomparable beauty of an English pastoral land. The journey is accomplished without fatigue, without anxiety; for the end of it can only be the quiet corner of a moor, or some sleepy meadow. Speed is of no account—distance immaterial. The caravaneer looks down with indifference upon the dense curiosity of the smaller towns; the larger cities he wisely avoids.

The writer occupied the humble post of brakesman—elected thereto in all humility by an overpowering majority. The duties are heavy, the glory small. A clumsy vehicle like a caravan can hardly venture down the slightest incline without a skid under the wheel and a chain round the spoke. This necessitates the frequent handling of a heavy piece of iron, which is black and greasy at the top of a hill and red-hot at the bottom.

A steep hill through the town dispelled the Lord George Sanger illusion at one fell blow, the rustic-urban mind being incapable of conceiving that that self-named nobleman could demean himself to the laying of the skid.

Of the days that followed there remains the memory of pleasant sunny days and cool evenings, of the partridge plucked and cleaned by the roadside, fried deliciously over the paraffin flame, amidst fresh butter and mushrooms with the dew still on them. We look back with pleasure to the quiet camp in a gravel-pit on a hill-top far from the haunts of men—to the pitching of the tent by moonlight in a meadow where the mushrooms gleamed like snow, to be duly gathered for the frying-pan next morning by the host-in-himself and in pyjamas. Nor are the sterner sides of caravan life to be forgotten—the calamity at the brow of a steep hill, where a nasty turn made the steady old wheeler for once lose his head and his legs; the hard-fought battle over a half-side of bacon between the Bedlington terrier and the writer when that mistaken dog showed a marked preference for the stolen Wiltshire over the partridge bone of charity.

And there are pleasant recollections of friends made, and, alas! lost so soon; of the merry evening in a country house, of which the hospitable host in his capacity of justice of the peace gave us short shrift in the choice between the county gaol and his hospitality. Unless we consented to sleep beneath his roof and eat his salt, he vowed he would commit us for vagabonds without visible means of support. We chose the humiliation of a good dinner and

a sheeted bed. The same open-handed squire hung partridges in our larder, and came with us on the forecastle to pilot us through his own intricate parish next day.

Also came the last camp and the last dinner, at which the writer distinguished himself, and the host-in-himself was at last allowed to manipulate (with accompanying lecture) a marvellous bivouac-tin containing a compound called beef *à la mode*, which came provided with its own spirits of wine and wick, both of which proved ineffectual to raise the temperature of the beef above a mediocre tepidity. Parker, having heard that the remains of this toothsome dish were intended for his breakfast, wisely hid it with such care that the dog stole it and consumed it, with results which cannot be dwelt upon here.

Of the vicissitudes of road travel we recollect but little. The incipient sea-sickness endured during the first day has now lost its sting; the little differences about the relative virtues of devilled partridge and beef *à la mode* are forgotten, and only the complete novelty, the heedless happiness of it all remains. We did not even know the day of the week or the date; which ignorance, my masters, has a wealth of meaning nowadays.

“Date—oh, ask Parker!” we would say.

And Parker always knew.

TO A SIGN-PAINTER.

O WORTHY artist, in my chair
 I sat, and watched you working there,
 A humble slave of art,
 Upon the board which bears the sign
 I saw you painting, line by line,
 In hues astonishingly fine,
 That marvellous White Hart.

How gleaming white the creature shone,
 How green the grass he stood upon,
 When all was quite complete !
 Observe the posture of the head,
 The eye (a lurid spot of red),
 The strange extremities, instead
 Of ordinary feet !

You vanished at your labour's close,
 Since other landlords, I suppose,
 For your assistance ask ;
 A Ship—a military scene—
 A Lion red—a Dragon green—
 The Sun and Moon, with stars between—
 What is your present task ?

What though perspective you ignore,
 What though the paints you keep in store
 Are bad as bad can be ?
 Impressionists would doubtless glance
 Upon your masterpiece askance,
 But yet their scorn is not, perchance,
 From envy wholly free.

An artist in a humble sphere,
Of carping cliques you have no fear,
 No dread of critic's tongue.
Contented with the rustics' praise,
No base committee of R.A.'s
Avails to rob you of your bays —
 Your works are always hung !

No thought of unavailing quest
For purchasers disturbs your rest,
 No fear of payment late ;
Your work is scarcely finished when
You take the money, there and then—
A system which more famous men
 Would gladly imitate !

FOREST TITHES.

BY A SON OF THE MARSHES.

THE leaves are falling fast, for a spell of wet weather has been followed by frosty nights, though the days are bright and warm still, and the mellow autumnal tints glow in the sunshine.

At the farm, which is perched on the highest point of the moor, not a sound is to be heard, the menfolk being all at work in the fields. The farmstead is in good order, old though it is, for its stone walls were solidly built, they are thick, and all the timber used was oak, well seasoned. So substantial was the work that, with the exception of a few necessary repairs about some of the outbuildings, all is in nearly the same condition in which it was left by the owners, long dead, who caused it to be built so many generations ago. The land also is to all appearance just what it was when the site of the farm was chosen. What was suited for cultivation was planted then and the rest left wild, as it still remains, close to the solid path or track that leads from the woods up to the farm; and halfway up the rush-grown hillside is a bog into which it would be a sorry business to stray. Cattle avoid it by instinct; no hoof-prints are ever seen round that soft place.

Never a moor without its trout stream, or streams, which flow at its foot, cutting sharp runs where, in the course of years, all the earthy matter has been washed away, leaving at last a bottom of clean sharp sand and bright washed stones. You can hear the swirl and the splash where it runs through the copse-growth of the moor side and see the glistening of the pure bright water where it turns into the meadows as it continually pursues its course from the hills and moors above, down to the moors below; hidden here and there by thorns and brambles, giant 'hexes,' thistles, ferns, and all the other growth common to wild lands.

Rustic bridges, the brickwork of which is as old as the stonework of the farm buildings, carry the cart tracks from one meadow—if land such as this can be dignified by that name—to another. Where they have fallen into decay and tumbled into the stream many years ago—for mosses cover all the brickwork, over which the water ripples, forming miniature cascades—thick planks have

been placed, and turf on the top of them. And as in the course of time the cattle passing and repassing, to say nothing of the carts, have worn the turf covering thin, more has been added, and tough heather tangle worked in with it; until at last a good solid crust has been formed above the stout, rough oak planks which is nearly a foot in thickness. As a rule the water is only a few inches deep in the middle; but where it has cut its way under the roots of the trees that line its course from its source up in the hill moors to its final delivery into the river Mole, it is deeper. If you probe with a stick under those roots you will know just where the trout rush to when they are frightened. At this time of the year they do get frightened, and more than that, killed; for it is their spawning time; or, as the dwellers on the moor put it, 'the trout are running up;' and the herons are about, taking their moorland tithe, which they will have, try to stop them who will.

For a whole week I have been watching five particular herons busy in most systematic fashion; and also the trout. If you go to work very quietly, you may watch fish, but it is only learned by much practice and experience. A footfall or a shadow will be enough to clear the stream, or at least that part of it which you wish to examine, in a flash.

So we slip down the side of the hedge that leads down to one of the old bridges—they might equally well be called culverts; and before reaching it we crawl on our hands and knees to look through a small opening there is between the hedge and the brickwork. The sunshine being warm and bright, the trout are working on the clean sharp gravel, winding and rooting about like eels. Not large fish—they never are that in the upper parts of these quick hill streams; the largest of them is only a small herring size, the very thing for our herons. Scotch firs, of a fine growth, are numerous along the run of the stream; single trees, and again clumps of smaller ones. Some of the larger ones are sadly torn by the fierce blasts that sweep over the moors in winter. In the firs, when the trout run up, one may look for the heron, one of the keenest and most sagacious of birds. Many a time has he outwitted and outsmarted me in the days of my youth, and I have always admired and respected him accordingly. I would fain write a whole book about the heron alone—percher, as well as swimmer and wader, is he. From what I have seen of him in the trees, he is as much at home in them as is a blackbird

or a thrush, and his movements are far more graceful, notwithstanding his form and size; for the bird drops, glides and walks about the trees as noiselessly as a grey and white shadow. On the very topmost shoots of a fir that can afford him a foothold he will perch, and sit there for twenty minutes, and more, at a time. A few days ago I watched one do this from a place of ambush, which was, like most of those suitable for the purpose, anything but a pleasant one, being a large clump of blackthorns and brambles, in the midst of which I lay hidden. He was not, however, allowed to enjoy his elevated point of survey in peace, for missel-thrushes, blackbirds and song thrushes, aided by finches, dashed at him, until the long neck and bill went darting and striking out like a silvery snake in all directions as the birds flew at him. Then he was left unmolested, and away they flew to cover screaming and chirping their loudest.

From my lowly position I had examined some firs that were close to the edge of the stream, thinking herons might be in them, but had failed to discover any. They were there, however, and directly I rose to my feet, almost over my head floated two of these birds, coming out of the very trees I had watched closely, glasses in hand. The heron's positions fall in with chance projections and broken limbs so well—he perches in fir trees by preference—that it is impossible to detect him before he has caught sight of oneself. I put one up recently, and directly in front of me; the bird was standing close to the edge of water overshadowed by some large alders; the grey mud below being plentifully sprinkled with large open dead shells of the fresh-water mussels. So well did the heron's plumage agree with its environment that, until it moved right before me, I had not seen it. Until then it had only shown a bit of white, like the glitter of the inside portions of the mussel shells that lay gaping on the mud beneath it.

Owls, also, in their plumage mimic and fall in with the tones of their natural surroundings, to a degree past the belief of those who have not patiently watched them in their own haunts.

And often the most patient and constant watching is unattended with success. Early and late had I been abroad of late, and had come home quite disheartened with failure, and then I succeeded in my quest owing to my coming unexpectedly on a large, partially drained moorland fish pond whilst in search of an artist friend of mine who, as I had been told, was painting in that

direction. After stumbling on bits that were enough to drive a would-be artist wild, through my fieldglass I discovered him settled right out in the most treacherous part of the moor. Not without much cautious travelling did I reach him. Whatever possessed him to go and paint in one of the worst moor swamps of the district? I asked. 'To get a faithful study of the moor mosses, sulphur yellow and rich dark brown, with the rush clumps scattered about over it,' was his reply. This was his foreground; in the distance he had two cottages, and beyond were the fir woods.

On his feet were huge wooden sabots lashed tightly to his leather boots. These, he informed me, were made by himself—sepulchral-looking articles they were. He had placed four coats of black paint on them, he said, both inside and out. Any way, they answered his purpose admirably, for although the water had been flowing under his feet beneath the moss all the day, no damp had reached him; and the result on his canvas was all that could be desired. To my request that he would favour me with a dance in those coffin-like damp-protectors before I left him, he replied that it would hardly be wise to dance about much, for only a few days previously a couple of cows had got bogged just below the very spot on which we were, and had the farmer's men not pulled them out with ropes they must have been smothered.

To return to my moorland fish-pond, the sight of five herons sailing in wide circles over any spot would be sufficient to attract the notice of any naturalist. The birds were shouting hoarsely to each other after the fashion of rooks, but far more noisily, just out of gun shot, but within capital distance for a rook rifle. My appearance in the open did not cause the slightest difference in their movements, they kept passing over me in their wide circles, which was quite contrary to their usual cautious method of movement. On diving into the deep hollow of the moor I discovered the cause of this. A sluice at the further end of the pond had rotted and given way, letting great quantities of fish down into the moor stream, to the great joy of all the prowlers in the district, both furred and feathered, particularly of the herons. And the foresters, noting the birds at work in the stream, profited by the sight, and had fine fish also, for the mere picking of them up out of the water, which was too shallow, now that the stream had gone down, to cover them.

When the herons found that the stream was not safe for them,

they confined their fishing to the centre of the water that remained in the large pond, where they were in no danger, and where their finny prey seemed literally ready to jump into their mouths; for the large fish, pike, perch, trout and eels, all of them that remained there, chased the smaller fry continually. So eager were they, that the shallow edges were all on the ripple with small fish that had rushed thither, where those that fed on them could not follow them. But even this did not completely frustrate the murderous intentions of the bigger fish, for some of the pike rushed on to the mud and perished there, being unable to get out of the ooze. This accident had brought the herons to the spot in force. The immediate reason of their hoarse cries and their circling flights at the time I came up was soon explained. Two men were repairing the broken sluice gate at the further end of the pond, and although the birds might have settled and fed to their hearts' content, they would not do it whilst the workmen were there.

The sluice pond job is finished, but the pond is still very low; it will take a long time to fill up the large space again, even though it is supplied by a trout stream. So the herons—more have come since the first ones prospected and returned a favourable report in their own bird fashion—have it all their own way there. They range the edges of the shallow pools as well as the main current in the centre, and when satisfied to the full they rest in the trees near, where, I am happy to say, they have not been fired at. A few gentlemen who rent these moorland districts for the rough shooting they can get in them, have given instructions that the herons shall be left undisturbed—a very wise precaution, for the diet of these birds is a varied one, and some of the creatures that have their habitat where the heron hunts for his living are far too numerous.

As long as the moors remain there never will be any lack of trout in its streams, yet even those who have the right to fish there do not always get them. After all, a shillings' worth of fresh herrings would, in my opinion, surpass even a fortunate catch of such small fish, and it seems a pity that so many of the little spotted beauties should have to go to make an ordinary 'fry,' as they term it. However, there is no perceptible falling off; others come to take the places of those that get caught; and happily, many who have the privilege of fishing, not only do not use it much themselves, but they take very good care that some who have

not that right, yet could very well dispose of the fish, or feed themselves and their children with it, do not get the chance. When the moon shines our herons do not let much escape their sharp eyes and bills.

Calm and beautiful as the moor farms look in the summer and autumn, surrounded also by the loveliest woodland scenery in England, in the long winter time they look the picture of dreariness; the snow frequently drifts up about them so as to shut them out from the rest of the world. In the lanes it is shoulder high where it has been blown by the fierce gusts of howling winds that sweep over the uplands. A fortnight of such weather as this brings the wild creatures close up to human dwellings, and particularly to these lonely farmsteads. When the light shows red through the window casements, before the stout shutters are pinned up for the night, is the signal for the fox to come and see if he can pick up a supper somehow. It will be through no fault of his if he fails in this, if there is anything about that he can kill and eat, from a turkey down to a poor starved blackbird, or from a hare to a mouse. I have seen some grey dog foxes that I should not like to be shut up in a small room with, if I had nothing but a stick in my hands. A hard fighter is Reynard, when cornered; he snaps like a wolf and is active as a cat. He makes short work of anything he can capture. Domestic fowls have, some of them, an aggravating way of preferring to roost, like pheasants, in the trees at night, and to make their nests away out in the moorland or under the trailing plants and bushes. That jubilant cackle, however, which the successful hen cannot control herself sufficiently to repress, after she has had the cunning to hide away in her nesting place, betrays her to other creatures besides her lawful owners. She may even have been prudent enough to wander a little way from her eggs before she commits herself to it; but the fox knows the meaning of the cry and profits by it. Although, as a rule, he prowls about in the night time, when his cubs begin to eat flesh and are hungry, he is not particular as to the hour, provided the locality be a lonely one. I have known the hen's jubilant voice stopped abruptly, and on going to the spot whence it had sounded have found a few feathers and the marks of a hurried scuffle, but no fowl.

During one bitter winter I was, in the pursuit of my calling, located in the heart of the moorlands, where my home for the

time was in the cottage of a hearty old couple. After supper the three of us were wont to occupy the old-fashioned chimney settles—'Father' and 'Mother' on one side of the fireplace, and I on the other. I happened to say that I had overheard some men complaining that they had tracked a fox, and found a couple of their fowls buried.

'Ah!' said the old man, as he puffed slowly at his pipe, and patted the red-hot ash with his finger, 'I killed a fox for that werry self-same thing; but,' he added, almost in a whisper, 'nobody knowed on it. You 'members it, mother.'

'Massy, oh!' rejoined she, 'I wouldn't hev sich another set out as thet 'ere fur all the spring chicken as iver wus hatched. I wus feared the Squire wud ha' got hold on't. A good master he wus, but he showed no marcy to any thet hed killed a fox on his grounds, an' they run middlin' wide.'

'Mother kep' her fowls for market,' resumed the old man, 'they paid middlin', most special in airly spring time; 't was jest sich a winter as this 'ere, an' some o' them fowls went. She was 'mazin' vexed, for they kep' on goin'. I knowed 'twas a fox, but didn't let on tu mother, on'y one mornin' she seed him cum slippin' roun' on the snow. Thet did it. When I come home to supper that same night she looks me most oncommon straight in the face, an' she says, "Kill that 'ere *thing*, father, or 'twill ruin us." She was middlin' spirity that time o' day, I ken tell ye, an' I knowed she meant what she said. Well, to cut it short, I got one o' mother's oldest hens, an' fixed her up so as the fox could see her, in an empy pigstye. Right in front o' the old hen, about a foot away, wus a trap, a real good un. We went to bed and in the middle o' the night we wus 'woke by the most desprit row. "Father," sez mother, "you've ketched thet 'ere varmint o' a fox. Git up, an' take a prong wi' yer." (A prong is local for *pitchfork*.)

'Up I gets, lights my lantern, takes the prong, an' goes out. Massy, oh! the old hen wus hollering like mad, an' the fox wus bangin' about in thet 'ere trap, the way he flew about an' bit wus a sight to see. I settled un with the prong, an' the old hen too, to stop her hollerin'; an' I buried the pair on 'em, in one hole, a goodish bit away from the house; but 'twas a long time afore we felt easy like; fur 'twas a most menjous row to be heerd in the dead o' the night, ef anybody hed bin about they must ha' heerd it.'

If very stringent measures had not been taken for his preservation, the fox would have long ago shared the fate of others of our wild creatures more virtuous but less fortunate than himself. Fox hunters to the manor born have, of course, their own views on the matter, and these are very properly universally respected. Besides this, it is not pleasant for some others belonging to a certain class who have struggled up into Society—with a big S—and wish to keep there, to be cut dead because they have given their keepers orders to kill foxes. So Master Reynard goes on taking his tithes, especially when he has got cubs, for whom it is his duty to provide. And his foragings round the lonely moor farms are not by any means a dead loss to those who suffer from his depredations. If complaint is made in the right quarters, compensation is generally most cheerfully given. Yet I have known some unhappy souls grunt even after they had received more pay than the case demanded. It is a hard thing to please folks. A fox, dog or vixen, never comes near man, woman or child if he can help it; but if hemmed in, he would be as dangerous as a collie dog is under the same circumstances.

At the foot of one of the South Down hills, where there is a long strip of coarse grass and moss, a quarter of a yard wide and over a mile long, there is one of the abiding places of the badger—one well known to me. The land was once broken up by the plough, but this proved useless labour and expense, and now it is a paradise for wild creatures. That prince of British butterflies, the purple emperor, floats and dashes over this bit of moorland valley, crossing from one belt of oaks to another. The moss bee and the humble bee have their homes in the mossy surface, and our old friend, in his grey, black, and white coat, scratches them out with his claws, or roots them up with his nose like a pig. In some of the moor districts he has been wiped out, and much it is to be regretted that those who have had the power to prevent this had not also the knowledge and the disposition to do it. One by one our wild animals and birds are dwindling down as to numbers; not shot or trapped on account of any real harm they may do, but for the money the creatures fetch, dead or living. One hears in all directions of the harm done by rabbits, although the Ground Game Act has been passed. What can be expected when the creatures that were there to keep the pin-wire vermin in check are killed? Besides which these are bred in vast numbers expressly for the markets.

Our vermin-killers—polecats, stoats, and weasels—have been captured and bought in wholesale numbers, in order that they may be exported to some of our colonies to kill the rabbits which were formerly introduced there by mischievous bunglers, and now prove a curse to the land. Change of climate and habitat alters the habits of creatures that are not indigenous. It will be found that polecats, stoats, and weasels will turn out another curse; instead of killing off the rabbits, they will certainly prove an inveterate foe to poultry and to the small animals that are native to the soil. I speak feelingly on this subject, as one whose opinion on the matter has been often asked and freely given, yet never followed. This acclimatising question is a most unsettled one, but it will have to be studied, to spare much future trouble to us and our colonies. Soon we shall be cursed with a plague of rats and mice that will not easily be kept under.

Man considers himself the lord of creation, as well as of the soil he buys or inherits, but some of the changes he brings about are to my mind matter for great regret. Quite recently I have seen pheasants take the place of black game in one district I know. Only a few of the latter lingered there, the remnant of a once fairly numerous family, real natives of the moors, not imported birds; but they are gone now. Where they once fed about the rush clumps, on the rush seeds, a keeper's cottage now stands, with dog kennels attached. Instead of one's flushing a blackcock one sees a pheasant spring up, and the croon and play of the former has given place to the drum and challenge of the latter. And two years ago I saw preparations made on a secluded side of the moor to turn the locality, where only wild ducks, woodcocks, snipe, and blackgame had had their habitats, into a cover for pheasants. The job is now completed and it will answer its purpose to perfection, but the alterations have certainly taken away some of the beauties of that wild hillside.

To return, however, to our moorland tithe-takers. The polecat, who used to be one of the chief of these, is now almost a thing of the past, and when he is seen or captured the circumstance is made a note of. Like the rest of his species, this very powerful, and in his own domain most useful, little creature carries his prey like a retriever. From the polecat to the weasel the strength of the family is something remarkable. It is a wonderful sight to see one of them come bounding along, holding a prey as large and as heavy as itself off the ground by the middle of the back. A

few days ago, a friend of mine—a keen observer of wild life, the result of whose observations will, I trust, ere long come before the public—saw what he took to be a lump of dry hedgerow plums blown up by the wind over a green ride towards him. As it came nearer, it proved to be some creature bounding along bearing a half-grown rat, and, when within a yard or so of the spot where he stood, the rat was dropped on the turf and a weasel looked at him as only a weasel can look. The animal was only aware of the proximity of a human when he got wind of my friend, in fact the rat he carried before him prevented the weasel from seeing what was directly in front of him. The man lifted the rat, noted the way in which it had been killed, and then placed it where the weasel had dropped it, so that the latter might fetch it after he had gone.

Rats do not of course frequent waste lands, since there would be nothing for them to feed on there; but most of the cottagers who live on commons keep pigs and fowls. From one of these homesteads the rat was being carried to a wood-stack, where it could be consumed in peace. Determined foes to rats and mice are the weasels, also to frogs and some other small deer, and for doing man this good service he kills or exports them where they are not wanted. It is true that stoats and weasels kill rabbits, but for one rabbit they will kill forty rats and mice. I only wish the whole of the family were more numerous! Five years ago we had a great plague of mice in the woodland districts. The pests invaded the gardens of those who had large houses near the woods, cut down the flowers in the borders and dragged them into their holes, and nibbled the wall fruit. In fact the folks had to cast about to find measures for their destruction. When things were at their worst, weasels made their appearance, whole families of weasels, just as the short-eared owls suddenly appeared during the more recent plague of voles on the southern uplands of Scotland in large numbers. These owls have also remained and bred in the district, to the great relief of the land. It is to be hoped they will be unmolested and their usefulness universally recognised. Sir Herbert Maxwell has used his local influence, I believe, to this end.

The weasels were noticed all making their way to the parts where the mice were gathered. Then the mice shifted their quarters, but the weasels followed. Two or three families, the old ones and their half-grown kittens, will soon move mice where they

are about. Four or five ferocious old grey rats will kill more poultry—of all kinds—and steal more eggs than all the weasel family in a district.

Anyone walking on the roads that are only separated from the cornfields by low hedges in our outlying country districts, in the dusk of the evening, after the corn has been carried, can see some very pretty hunting; for then the rats come to the fields and live for a time in the hedgerows. If you go very quietly and look over one of the field-gates, you will see dusky, bunched-up forms some eight or ten yards from the hedge; rats these are, feeding on the scattered grain. Presently they go loping up and down, with their peculiar gait, making for the cover of the hedge. There was nothing apparently in the field to have alarmed them, so we look upwards and see at once what it was that caused them to seek the cover of that hedge bottom. Two brown owls are beating over the field in quest of rats or mice, no matter which; the first that can be got at lives but a very few moments, after it is gripped and bitten through the back of the neck. Their hunt, this beat, has been useless; they flit over the adjacent fir-trees and for a time become invisible to us. One by one, by threes and twos, out come the rats again; the owls are not overhead, so some venture out a longer distance from the hedge. Presently we hear a rare scamper and some squeaking, for the owls have changed their tactics. They have come down the side of the hedge this time, and flapped again into the fir-woods, each with a rat in his grip. A very fortunate matter it is for the owls that no one in a velvet-jacket and carrying a double-barrelled gun is at hand, or their spreadeagled forms might have ornamented the gable end of a dog-kennel next morning. One of these gentlemen, to whom I lately appealed for their protection, replied, 'I ain't *sin* 'em do what some says they will do; but I kills 'em when I has the chance, to keep 'em from doin' of it.'

When will things be set right in these directions? I often wonder. I have seen the inside of wheat-stacks eaten out, befouled and ruined by rats and mice; and still owls are killed and farm-labourers are rewarded for killing stoats and weasels. A faggot-stack, also, I have known half pulled to pieces, to get at a poor little mouse-killing weasel that had taken refuge there from its pursuers.

Even that glorious insect-destroyer, the great green dragon-fly, that helps to clear country lanes of such winged pests as hornets,

wasps, and the ferocious stoat-flies—'stouts'—has evil properties attributed to it by the rustics. I have seen country children—and, indeed, grown-up people—show far more fear at the sight of that swift-winged beauty than they would at hornets or a wasps' nest. 'Them 'ere things is adder-spears, an' it ain't safe tu meddle wi' 'em.' This superstitious belief, in fact, saves the grand insect from being killed. It is a very rare thing to see a dragon-fly captured in country places. The farmers' lads also call the great dragon-fly the hoss-stinger. Just a word of advice to those who have delicate fingers: this fine fly, if held incautiously, can and will bite pretty severely. So will the very large and handsome garden spiders which weave their wonderfully geometrical webs, suspended from twigs and lashed to branches, in the latter part of the autumn. A colony of very fine ones have located themselves in some box-trees close to my back door. The number of insects they capture in their nets is something wonderful, particularly large bluebottle flies. They do not get all they capture though; for wasps come and take the bluebottles out of the web piecemeal—the head goes first, and the body is left for a second journey. Full well do the spiders know the difference in the sound of the hum of a fly's wing and that of a wasp. When the latter comes to rob their webs they do not show themselves; but directly a bluebottle gets meshed, they make a tiger-like rush for it.

The hedgehog, urchin or hedge-pig of Shakespeare, is very little understood so far as his habits are concerned. I have seen some recent statements in various papers to the effect that hedgehogs will kill young fowls, as if this were a new fact for the edification of their readers. Not only will they kill the young ones, but the old ones are not safe from them, if in a coop. The foot of Master Hedgehog is sure to be put in or on it if he gets the chance. I have even seen our friend described as 'our poor little persecuted English porcupine.' That he can never be, for his habits are nocturnal and no one considers him worth looking after, unless it be a gipsy who has a taste for baked hedge-pig. He is not so harmless, however, as some other creatures. A very large hedgehog is quite capable of killing a wild rabbit. He can depress his spine and squeeze through places one would have supposed too narrow for him.

The distance this nimble creature can travel over is quite remarkable. Out in his own domain, the woods and the fields,

he is perfectly harmless. Some hedgerows are frequented by numbers of them. There they lie curled up among the dead leaves in the daytime. In other hedges you may search for them in vain. All would go well if the bristly little animal would keep his own place. But he will not do this. He sniffs until he finds something to his liking, to which he applies himself with pig-like determination. Sometimes this happens to be a trap baited with portions of rabbit's flesh, where he gets caught and whines most pitifully.

But sometimes, when the farmer's wife goes to look at the coop out on the grass in front of the house, she finds her chicks killed and eaten, and their mother bitten and nearly dead with fright, the sole cause of the mischief being a great hedgehog, which is trying to get out of the coop, not so easy a matter now that his stomach is full of chicken as it was for him to creep through when empty. In such a case he is usually promptly settled by the points of a bright hayfork.

But, after all, when the matter is fairly considered without prejudice, the amount of tithe taken by the wild creatures of the moorlands is very small. The creatures that are able to do much mischief are now very few in numbers. As to the birds, the moors are not their favourite dwelling-places—at least, not of our common birds, which keep to the line of cultivated lands. You will see trees laden with fruit in the cottage gardens, placed in spots few and far between on the moor; cottage and garden in its own small enclosure. The jays may squawk in the cover round about these; but they let the fruit alone, for they would have to cross a considerable open space from any given quarter to reach the fruit. On the whole, considering all the devices employed by man to circumvent these tithe takers, it shows great sagacity on their part that they are able to get as much from him, or his, as they do.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LOVE TURNS SOUR.

THE Marchese di Leonforte was a humbled and saddened man as he walked away from Clarges Street towards the hotel in which he had taken up his temporary abode. He had arrived at a tolerably clear comprehension of the state of affairs, and that was, so far, satisfactory; yet he was painfully conscious of having failed altogether to carry out his original purpose, which was not satisfactory at all. To avenge an insulted, injured and adorable lady ought to have been so simple! But what are you to do when inexorable and irrational custom snatches your weapons out of your hands? As he said to himself, addressing an imaginary controversialist, '*Che vuole?*' The times are bad; but they are what they are, and we live in them. The old remedies were the best; only it appears that they are obsolete, and we have no choice but to utilise the new ones. For the rest, I do not blame this cold-blooded Englishman, whose only fault is his insensibility; and that he cannot help. He has his excuses—I do not deny them—but, *per Dio!* if she required excuses, she would have hers. What does it all come to? That he is united to a woman whom he is incapable of appreciating, and who must, at all hazards, be released from him. How? You are wanting in intelligence if you put such a question, considering that we are now near the end of the nineteenth century. I do not like it; I do not pretend to think it moral or noble or even decent; but I venture to remind you that it is not I who have made society what it is, nor I who chose the date of my birth.'

Not a few of the pedestrians in Piccadilly turned round to stare at the tall, black-browed foreigner who strode past them, accompanying these muttered self-communings with appropriate gestures. But he heeded neither their curiosity nor their smiles, being in imagination very far away from the streets of London at the time.

It was not that endless prospect of stunted red-brick buildings and wood pavements and omnibuses and hansom cabs that his dreaming eyes saw, but the sun-baked hills of Sicily, with their white towns and villages perched upon the heights, their orange and lemon groves nestling in sheltered valleys, and the snow and fire of Etna towering above them against a melting blue sky. Sicily is to all intents and purposes as remote from the world as Central Africa ; two people who loved each other and found one another's society all-sufficient might well be happy together in its lovely scenery and divine climate, despising sneers and censures to which their ears would necessarily be closed. To elope with another man's wife is, to be sure, a deadly sin ; but repentance and reparation are open to all sinners, and Leonforte, like many other devout persons of his nation and temperament, had notions with regard to the meaning of repentance and reparation which do not obtain amongst the cooler and more logical races who inhabit the northern regions of Europe. There would be a divorce, followed in due course by a marriage, which the Church would doubtless not refuse to sanction. The remedy was in some respects an ignoble one ; but it seemed to be the only remedy, and when matters have reached the stage of becoming intolerable, a remedy of some sort must needs be discovered. For his own part, he had proclaimed his readiness to fight Mr. Colborne, should that gentleman think fit to throw down the glove ; he could do no more. As for the Countess, whom he pictured to himself as a sort of modern Andromeda, praying Heaven to set her free from a curiously amenable monster, it was scarcely likely that she, with her free-thinking proclivities, would spurn the suggestion of an unlawful and irreligious union which might perhaps last for six months or so before it could be legalised and sanctified. At any rate Perseus, modern against his will, had been granted no other sword with which to sever her bonds. It was true that she might have no fancy for a Sicilian Perseus and might prefer her bonds and even her unobtrusive monster to his succour ; but that was just what must be ascertained. There was no alternative that the Marchese di Leonforte could discern.

He packed up his clothes, paid his bill, and took his ticket for Paris by the night mail, leaving quite a large number of engagements to take care of themselves. English society had shown itself hospitable and, under other circumstances, he would gladly have prolonged his stay in a capital which was not devoid of

attractions for him ; but great considerations swallow up small ones. . He could not have explained himself by post, nor could he rest until he should have seen the woman whom he loved, and heard his doom pronounced by her lips. It was not even certain that he would see her ; for she had made no promise to remain in Paris, and the thought that she might already have flitted elsewhere sufficed to keep him wide awake throughout the tedious night's journey.

That disappointment, however, was spared him. When he hurried off to the Avenue Friedland on the ensuing day, he was told that the Countess was at home, although she was *un peu souffrante*, and it was doubtful whether she would receive visitors. After a brief delay, during which his card was conveyed to her, it was intimated to him that he might enter, and presently he was conducted to her boudoir, where he found her extended upon a sofa, with an open French novel lying upon her knees. She held out her left hand to him without moving, and said :

‘ Back already ? It appears that London has made haste to weary you. *Au fait*, I did not expect you to fall in love with those people at first sight ; they are an acquired taste, and you do not assimilate fresh tastes easily.’

‘ I liked them,’ answered Leonforte ; ‘ they were very kind to me. I could not stay with them, because—but I will give you an account of it all as soon as you have told me about yourself. I am grieved to hear that you have been ill since I left.’

‘ I am abominably ill ; I haven't the strength to stir, and I cough all the night through. Dr. Schott pulls a long face and would like me to make my will, in case of accidents ; only he is afraid that his name might not appear in it if he were to offer such unwelcome advice. ‘ I am not going to die yet, though ; and when I do die he will have reason to jump for joy, supposing that he has the good luck to survive me. Let us talk of something less lugubrious. Sit down where I can see you and relate your adventures. Have you brought me the odds and ends that I left in Carlton-House Terrace ? ’

Leonforte threw up his hand and struck himself on the forehead. ‘ Ah, madame,’ he exclaimed despairingly, ‘ I do not know what to say to you ! It was atrocious of me ; but the truth is that I forgot your commission altogether ! What shall I do ? Shall I return at once and execute it ? By this time to-morrow I can be with you once more, and your orders will have been carried out.’

She laughed and answered that she would not impose so troublesome a task upon him. 'Nothing would be more simple than to send one of the servants across to England if I wanted to look at my little toys again,' said she; 'but I am not sure that I want to look at them, after all; they might remind me of incidents which I would just as soon forget. Pray, don't look so ashamed of yourself; you haven't done anything to be ashamed of. At least, I trust that you haven't. Now whom did you see over there?—and who was it who treated you so kindly? Not Lord and Lady Burcote, I should imagine.'

'Yes, indeed; they were most amiable. They invited me to dinner and presented me to many ladies and gentlemen. I saw also a young Mr. Innes, who spoke of you with gratitude and desired to be remembered to you. And I saw Miss Rowley, and— and Mr. Colborne.'

'We will come to him later on, if you don't mind. Tell me about the others, and especially about Frank Innes. I was very fond of him—more so than of any Englishman whom I can remember—and I think he might have found time to write to me in all these months. But perhaps he did not know my address. Well; how is he getting on?'

Leonforte related what little he knew about a youth in whom he felt no particular personal interest. It was not of Frank Innes nor of Frank Innes's chances of blossoming out into a successful professional singer that he had come to Paris to talk; but since it pleased the Countess to dwell upon this and upon other equally unimportant topics, he bowed to her wishes. Sooner or later she would have to mention her husband; and then it would become at once his duty and his privilege to say to her what he was firmly resolved not to leave the house without saying. But his patience was somewhat severely tried before she saw fit to come to the point. It was not until she had cross-examined him minutely as to his impressions of the Burcotes, as well as of a dozen other members of the British aristocracy, and had laughed heartily over some of his replies, that she remarked carelessly:

'You don't understand any of them a bit; but then I knew you wouldn't. I wonder how far you advanced towards understanding Mr. Colborne, who is neither more nor less incomprehensible than the rest of them. I think you said that you did make acquaintance with him.'

'Yes, madame, I made acquaintance with him,' answered the

Marchese gravely; 'if I had not advanced as far as that, I should not be here now. I cannot say that I entirely understand him, or any of his fellow-countrymen; but that, perhaps, was not necessary. I think I can understand that he is what we call in Italy *galantuomo*, within the limits fixed by the peculiar customs of England, and I am sure that I can understand his intentions. He accepts the situation *tout bonnement*; he will do nothing to alter it; certainly he will make no scandal, nor will he compromise Miss Rowley, who appeared to me to have assumed rather prematurely the rôle of an old maid. At the same time, he allowed me to perceive that the situation was not agreeable to him.'

A slight flush coloured the Countess's cheeks, and although she smiled at her interlocutor, her smile expressed neither affection nor respect. 'Dear me!' she exclaimed; 'so you talked the situation over together quietly and amicably, like two sensible men! That is quite what I should have expected of him, if it isn't precisely what I should have expected of you. And no doubt you ended by agreeing that the only satisfactory solution would be for me to betake myself to England with a hair shirt on my back and peas in my shoes, to prostrate myself before my husband and implore him to treat my past indiscretions with clemency.'

The truth was that she was very angry and bitterly disappointed. She had wanted to humiliate Douglas; she had wanted to render him publicly ridiculous; and now it seemed that the envoy whom she had deemed safe to discharge that kindly mission had tamely consented to parley with the enemy. She had half a mind to dismiss him from her presence forthwith; only she was curious to hear, before he went, what had actually passed between him and her husband.

Leonforte, stung by her undisguised contempt, hastened to enlighten her. 'Madame,' said he, 'you speak to me as if I were a coward. I will not complain of your speaking to me in that way, because, like myself, you are not English, and it may be that the habits of Englishmen are in some respects as strange to you as they are to me. But do not condemn me unheard. I was willing—I was more than willing, I was most eager—to fight Mr. Colborne; I considered that he had at least slighted you, and nothing would have rejoiced me more than to avenge the slight in your name. But how could I challenge a man who told me in so many words that honour, as it is understood in England, did not compel him to accept my challenge? For the rest, I must do him the justice

to say that he was not afraid of me ; he was only afraid of making himself laughed at.'

'You do not seem to have been troubled by any such apprehension. What title you can have fancied that you had to pick a quarrel with Mr. Colborne in my name I cannot guess ; but, having done so, you would have been just a shade less absurd, I should think, if you had slapped him in the face, instead of lamenting your inability to poke a hole through his right arm.'

Leonforte winced and his eyes blazed for a moment, but he did not lose his self-command. 'I do not believe that any man could have acted otherwise than as I acted,' he replied. 'I told Mr. Colborne that I would report faithfully to you the conversation which I had with him, and I will do so now, if I may claim your forbearance for a short time.'

She made a disdainful sign to him that he was at liberty to proceed, and she refrained from interrupting the recital of which he delivered himself with scrupulous exactitude, although she was more than once tempted to tell him that he had said quite enough. But her countenance and her manner were ominously composed when he ceased, and when she remarked :

'All this is most interesting, and I am charmed to hear how thoroughly you appreciate my husband and the many virtues which adorn his character. You have been a little impertinent ; but one must pardon impertinence which goes hand in hand with such disinterested friendship and such benevolent intentions. I presume that you have torn yourself away from your English friends only in order to suggest that I should return to be welcomed by them with open arms. It is a seductive picture ; I have hardly the heart to hold out against converting it into a reality. Shall we make the journey together ? And will you go to the Gare du Nord this evening and order a saloon carriage for me ?'

'Ah, don't jeer at me !' cried Leonforte, who felt that he had now honourably acquitted himself of all his obligations towards the man whom he desired to supplant. 'Don't you see that I was bound to tell you what Mr. Colborne said ? I have repeated his own words to you ; he has not intended to be cruel ; he would not be cruel to you intentionally if you went back to him. But of course you cannot and will not go back ; of course you cannot consent to live with one who has no real love for you ; and of course you cannot be satisfied with a separation which leaves you only nominally free. I have thought it all over : it is plain that

there must be a legal divorce, and it is not less plain that he will not help you to obtain such a divorce. What, then, remains to be done? Nothing, except that you yourself should compel him to demand it. Ah, dear Countess, I am not worthy of you; but at least I love you, and I ask nothing better than to be allowed to devote my whole life to you! It is not every day, believe me, that you will meet with such a love as mine! Come with me to Sicily, where we can forget the world and where we shall be hidden from it. When once the divorce has been pronounced by the secular authorities, you will be free to assume my name, and our union—I feel certain of it—will receive the sanction of the Church.'

He had fallen upon his knees beside her sofa and had seized her hand, which she withdrew from his grasp with a sudden jerk as she swung her feet to the ground and stood erect before him.

'Is it possible,' she exclaimed, 'for a man who is not a downright imbecile—at least, not much more of an imbecile than the ordinary run of men—to insult me so grossly and yet to deceive himself into the belief that he is rather paying me a compliment than otherwise! Evidently the thing is possible, since you are grovelling there upon the carpet as a living proof of its possibility; but I assure you that nothing short of this ludicrous spectacle could have brought conviction home to me. Even now, I am altogether at a loss to understand what excuse you can have had for imagining that I was enamoured of you.'

Leonforte scrambled up, looking pale and terribly disconcerted.

'You mistake me,' he returned; 'I have never dared to imagine what you speak of; I have only told you what you knew beforehand, that I love you with all my heart and soul; I have only ventured to offer you——'

'You have no right to offer me anything,' interrupted the Countess impatiently; 'you had no right in the world to suppose, as you seem to have supposed, that I sent you to London in order to make an unheard-of and degrading compact with my husband. I might say that I never sent you to London at all; but I don't care to shelter myself behind that equivocal defence. I did virtually send you; and would you like to know why you were sent? Simply because you are an uncivilized Italian bully, and because I assumed that you were more likely than not to make a laughing-stock of Mr. Colborne by pulling his nose in the lobby of the House of Commons or in the open street. You are quite right in saying that I mistook you, and assuredly you have mis-

taken me. As you cannot be of the slightest use to me in the future, perhaps you will now be so good as to retire and never come back again.'

He was utterly amazed by her brutal candour. It came upon him as a horrible revelation, transforming, as it were, the woman whom he had loved and hitherto respected into a sort of fiend before his very eyes. He might have guessed that her heart belonged to her husband, that she had been exasperated beyond all bearing, and that her wrath, coarse though the manifestation of it was, was not wholly ignoble; but he had little insight into human nature and little comprehension of common inconsistencies.

'Madame la Comtesse,' said he, in a voice which trembled slightly, despite all his efforts to keep it steady, 'you were very kind to me when my life was in danger; you would have been kinder still if you had allowed me to die, since you are what you tell me that you are. You say I have grossly insulted you. That may be; but you cannot think that I have meant to insult you, and I cannot doubt that you have meant to insult me. It only remains for me to promise you that your orders shall be obeyed and that you shall never again, if I can help it, be annoyed by the sight of my face.'

He bowed and made straight for the door, scarcely heeding the scornful laugh with which she responded to his parting speech. She said something about his having rendered it absolutely imperative upon her to enlighten him; but it really did not matter what she said. She had managed to persuade him that she was heartless, cruel and revengeful: if that was the process of enlightenment at which she had aimed, her object had been more than achieved.

Now, it is always an imprudent thing, and it is seldom or never an impossible thing, to convert love into hatred. The imprudence is greatly magnified when the converted or perverted lover happens to have Sicilian blood in his veins, and the Countess might have realised this, had she taken the trouble to study Leonforte's character. She had given him what his fellow-countrymen call *cattivo sangue*; she had reduced him to a condition of mind in which his fellow-countrymen are extremely apt to have recourse to poison or the stiletto, and she had earned for herself an enmity very different from that which her English husband was capable of entertaining towards her. But she was unaware of these circumstances; nor, possibly, would she have

cared very much if she had been aware of them. The Marchese was not, and never had been, anything to her. She was indignant against him and glad to have been able to hurt him and glad to have got rid of him—that was all. She dismissed him from her memory with as much ease as she had dismissed him from her presence.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LEONFORTE DOES WHAT SEEMS PRACTICABLE.

THE Anglo-Saxon race (which, it must be owned, is not given to ignoring, through any excess of modesty, the many sterling qualities which are its inheritance), might well return thanks for a few negative blessings, as well as for those positive and obvious ones conferred upon it by Heaven. We are, for example, practically unacquainted with that intense desire for vengeance which is one of the most irresistible passions that belong to the Southern nature. An Englishman, when he has been wronged by another man, usually wishes to thrash that man, and is not at all unlikely to carry his wish into effect. If, for one reason or another, he is precluded from so doing, he either has recourse to the law or swallows down his wrath: it would not give him any satisfaction to stab his adversary in the back. When his adversary chances to be of the opposite sex, he can do nothing, and does not care to do anything, except turn his back upon her: women cannot be thrashed, nor would there be much comfort in finding out their vulnerable points and striking them there. But Consuls at Mediterranean sea-ports are well aware that Spaniards, Italians and Greeks feel quite differently. These people allow the sun to go down upon their wrath; they do not mind waiting for months and years before paying off old scores; they almost always pay them off eventually, and, as far as can be judged from their statements when they are placed in the dock, they appease the voice of conscience rather than awaken it by their tardy reprisals. Something there must be in their temperament which is foreign to ours, and consequently incomprehensible to us, but which, if we are prudent, we shall do well to take into account before falling out with them.

The Countess Radna, who was fearless by constitution, and who had been rendered somewhat disdainful of humanity at large by

the force of circumstances, had no conception of the tempest which she had aroused in the breast of her rejected admirer. As has been said, she dismissed him forthwith from her memory, and she would have been greatly astonished to hear that the man who had taken leave of her with a certain dignity and outward appearance of composure would, if a dagger had been placed in his hand, have killed her and then committed suicide almost unhesitatingly and certainly without compunction. The only reasons why no such tragedy had been enacted were, in the first place, that he had not been provided with a lethal weapon ; and, in the second, that he had learnt by a rigid course of self-discipline to control his impulses. But in Sicily revenge and the necessity for it scarcely belong to the category of mere impulses. Leonforte knew that an angry man—that is to say, a man whom anger affects as it affected him—is neither more nor less than a lunatic ; in early life he had perceived, partly through personal experience and partly through observation of others, that it is ignoble to fall, even for a few instants, under the sway of sheer lunacy. He had therefore set himself to subdue his nature, and had been successful, although in subduing it he had not changed it. When he had told the Countess that she should never, if he could help it, see his face again, he had not meant to imply that he had done with her. It was as clear to him as the sun in Heaven that he must avenge the affronts with which he had been loaded by her, and so strangely are some varieties of the human race constituted that he would have parted with all sense of self-respect had he consented to disappear then and there out of her life. She had called him an uncivilised Italian bully ; she had told him, with a cynicism which she had not thought it worth while to disguise, that he had been employed by her solely in that supposititious capacity ; she had not only mortally offended him but had degraded herself in his estimation to such a degree that he now regarded her with a loathing akin to that which converted idolaters seem to experience towards their false gods. Neither the converted idolaters nor men of the stamp of the Marchese di Leonforte are apt to realise that their false gods and goddesses are but figments of their own imagination, and that it is idle to quarrel with abstractions.

The non-existent being whom Leonforte took for the Countess Radna was no abstraction to him ; she lived and breathed in the person of the lady who bore that name, and it was a question whether she ought to be suffered to live and breathe any longer.

At the very least, life must be made a dubious advantage for her. He could no more think of forgiving her for having so horribly deceived him than he could have thought of forgiving the murderer of his nearest relations.

Now this was all very fine, and there was some relief, though not very much, to be gained by pacing up and down his room half the night through and beating his head against the wall at intervals ; but when, in the grey light of dawn, he began to take stock of the means at his command, he did not find it so easy to see how the existence of this wicked woman was to be rendered hateful to her. What, after all, was he to do to her, unless he assassinated her ? Of her beauty and her wealth he could not deprive her ; and if, by denouncing her to her husband, he could deprive her of that slight clog upon her freedom she would be much obliged to him. Nevertheless, he eventually resolved to take that preliminary step. It would not be a long step ; but it would be a shade better than total inaction, and he had divined that, although she did not love Mr. Colborne, it would gall her to hear that she had acquired Mr. Colborne's disgust and contempt. Moreover, England seemed to offer more opportunities of serving her an ill turn than could be hoped for in Paris. With time and patience opportunities are pretty sure to arrive anywhere ; but the wise man seeks the most promising field.

Thus it came to pass that Leonforte was back in his London hotel within thirty-six hours of his departure thence, and that, twelve hours later, he was once more seeking admittance into those Clarges Street rooms which he had previously visited on quite another errand. He found the new Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the act of flitting. Friends had represented to Douglas that it was hardly consistent with the dignity belonging to his official position and the salary attached thereto that he should continue to live in lodgings ; so he had taken a furnished house in the same street for a few months, and was about to move into it when the Italian's card was brought to him. He was very busy ; he did not want to be interrupted, and he was by no means desirous of holding further parley with one whose relations towards him and his wife seemed to have been exhaustively discussed in a previous interview. Still, since the man had apparently thought fit to return to the charge, it was perhaps necessary that he should be received, and he was received accordingly.

‘I am afraid I can’t spare you more than a few minutes,’ Douglas began by saying. ‘My time is not my own, and, as you see, I am in the act of effecting a change of quarters. Please, don’t think me rude if I beg you to say at once what I can do for you.’

‘I am sorry that I have intruded upon you at an inconvenient moment, Mr. Colborne,’ answered the other; ‘but I will not detain you long. A few minutes will suffice for what I have to say to you. You can do nothing for me; but possibly I may be able to do something for you, and that is my excuse for being here. Since I last had the honour of calling upon you I have been to Paris, I have seen the Countess Radna, and I have reported to her, as I promised you that I would, the substance of our conversation. I think it only fair to tell you that her reception of me was not what I had anticipated, and that I now know her better than I did two days ago. Sir, you have done well to separate yourself from that woman; she has no heart.’

‘Hasn’t she?’ returned Douglas, with a smile. ‘I don’t know whether I ought to congratulate you or condole with you upon having made that discovery; but I believe I mentioned to you before that it is not I who have separated myself from her; it is she who has separated herself from me. Did you come here simply and solely in order to inform me that my wife has no heart?’

‘I came,’ replied the Marchese, ‘in order to tell you the truth about her; you ought to know it. I will not speak of myself—naturally, you can feel no sympathy for me—but you will probably comprehend the Countess as I now comprehend her when I tell you that, by her own confession, she sent me to England in the hope that I should hold you up to public scorn and shame by pulling your nose in the open street. That, she admits, was her only object, and she has turned me out of her house, like a disobedient valet, because I have not gratified her.’

‘I thought,’ observed Douglas, ‘that you had denied being the bearer of any commission from her. If you had tried to pull my nose in the street, I should probably have tried to knock you down; you wouldn’t have brought any very alarming amount of public scorn and shame upon me in any case. I suppose what you mean is, that you have been duped and that you are angry. Well, as you truly say, it would be contrary to nature for me to sympathise with you.’

‘I do not ask for sympathy; I ask only that you should believe that I have acted in good faith. On my side, I believe that you also have acted in good faith. I spoke the truth when I said that I held no commission from the Countess: nevertheless, it was on her behalf that I came to London, and she encouraged me to make the journey for a purpose which I was far from suspecting. You and I, Mr. Colborne, we are both honest men, and we have both been the dupes of a cruel and dishonest woman. I thought it due to you, as well as to myself, to make the situation clear by saying this.’

The dignified attitude assumed by the Italian did not commend itself to the straightforward common sense of the Englishman, who rejoined:

‘I really can’t see what you are driving at. I dare say you may have been duped; but it seems to me that, if you have, that is your own look-out. I haven’t been duped in any way that I know of, and I don’t particularly care whether my wife wished you to pull my nose or not.’

‘You don’t care! You don’t care that she loves neither you nor me, but that she would like to spite one of us and that she was not ashamed to make an unworthy use of the devotion of the other!’

‘Not the least bit in the world. To be frank with you, I doubt whether your devotion to her was of such a worthy description that she was bound to be over nice in her methods of turning it to account; and as for her designs upon my nose, I can forgive her for them, since they didn’t come off. The long and the short of the whole business appears to be that you jumped to unwarrantable conclusions. So much the worse for you! And, in a certain sense, so much the better for me!’

The Marchese ground his teeth and muttered something between them which Douglas’s ignorance of Italian prevented him from understanding to be a trenchant condemnation of the English nation at large. He said aloud:

‘Mr. Colborne, I perceive that it would be useless for me to trespass further on your time. I was aware that you had no love for your wife; I supposed—though doubtless I was mistaken—that you had some love for your honour. *Basta!*—I can say no more, except to repeat that, if you should consider any reparation on my part owing to you, I am entirely at your orders.’

‘Thank you very much,’ answered Douglas, laughing; ‘but I

have no anxiety to fight you, and there seems to be even less necessity for a duel between us now than there was when you were last kind enough to make me the same offer.'

The Marchese raised his shoulders and his eyebrows, drew his heels together, bowed and departed. It is not very easy to say why Mr. Colborne's supercilious indifference should have had the effect of enraging him, for he had not really expected anything else; but there is always, of course, a shade of distinction between anticipation and actual experience. For the rest, if he had not as yet accomplished much, he had at least done what it had seemed to him practicable to do; and he suspected that the Englishman, notwithstanding all that outward show of unconcern, must have been inwardly wounded, while it could no longer be possible for him to cherish any illusions as to his wife's true character. Leonforte was as certain as he was of his own existence that he hated and despised the Countess Radna; yet he was not sorry to be furnished with a plausible excuse for hating and despising Mr. Colborne into the bargain.

He was not far wrong in his surmise that Douglas had been wounded by a disclosure which could scarcely be agreeable to the most phlegmatic of husbands. A very phlegmatic and philosophic person might, no doubt, have drawn from it inferences flattering to his personal vanity, and Douglas had been pleased to hint that this was just what he had done; but in reality he deceived himself with no such dubious consolation. Being himself absolutely honest and straightforward, he neither liked nor made allowance for the crooked ways of women. Even if he had possessed the love of one who manifested her affection by egging on a stranger to insult him publicly, he would not have thought it worth having; but the mere fact of her having harboured that intention appeared to him to be convincing proof that he did not possess it. Why could she not say so and have done with it? Why could she not be satisfied with her liberty, which he had made no attempt to curtail? What injury had he ever done her that she must needs hatch spiteful and underhand plots against him? Were all women like that? Most of them, perhaps, were; yet he thought he knew of one, at least, who was an exception to the general rule; and, having a little spare time at his disposal that afternoon, he decided to employ it in calling upon Peggy Rowley. He said to himself that it would refresh him to converse with a member of the opposite sex who was as honourable, as

plain-spoken, and almost as comprehensible as an average gentleman.

But, as luck would have it, he had chosen his moment ill, and he found his influential friend, for once, in a very bad temper. What he had thought of as possibly desirable after their last conversation had come to pass ; that very morning Miss Spofforth had felt it her duty to report sundry remarks which had been made to her by various ladies who took a kindly interest in Miss Rowley, and to caution the latter that people who take upon themselves to create Under-Secretaries of State must not be surprised if their names are coupled with those of their *protégés*. This had vexed Peggy all the more because it was so perfectly true and so perfectly reasonable. She enjoyed a freedom of conduct which circumstances refuse to ninety-nine out of a hundred young women ; but there are limits which it is foolish to transgress, just as there are friendly relations which it is impossible to explain with any hope of being believed ; so that it had to be admitted that, if Lady Winkfield chose to insinuate nasty things about her, Lady Winkfield had solid ground under her feet. The only sensible course to pursue was, in the first place, to snub Miss Spofforth severely (which was done without delay), and, in the second, to see rather less of Douglas Colborne in the future than she had done in the past. The necessity which she recognised made her, however, very cross, and when Douglas was shown into her drawing-room, she greeted him with the not over civil exclamation of :

‘How extraordinary of you to turn up at this hour of the day ! I thought you never had time for paying visits. I’m just off to Hurlingham ; but I can give you twenty minutes if you have come about anything in particular.’

He replied that he had only come for the pleasure of having a chat with her, but that he would sacrifice that pleasure and take himself off at once, if he wasn’t wanted. Nevertheless, he remained where he was, and it did not take him very long to divulge the true object of his visit, which was to tell her about the revelation made to him by the Marchese di Leonforte and to ascertain what she thought of it.

Her opinion was soon stated : it was neither sympathetic nor couched in polite language. ‘You and your wife are a pair of fools,’ said she ; ‘I have no patience with either of you. Between you, you seem to be doing your very utmost to stir up a scandal out of nothing at all, and I dare say you will succeed in the long

run, if you go on like this. Considering that you both ardently desire to kiss and make friends, one would have thought that your simplest plan would have been to do so, without calling in the assistance of bloodthirsty foreigners. But I suppose you know your own business best.'

'I don't know whether my wife and I are a couple of fools or not,' returned Douglas, with a touch of acerbity; 'but I do know that there isn't the faintest prospect of our kissing and making friends. This man Leonforte seems to have been taken in just as I was, and there is no question of bloodthirsty foreigners or their assistance. I thought that perhaps your feminine wit might enable you to hit upon my wife's motive for despatching him here; but apparently you can only suggest the obvious and vulgar one, in which I don't happen to believe. I suppose you must have changed your mind since you impressed upon me that my best plan was to leave my wife severely alone.'

'That was some little time ago, wasn't it? One can't leave people alone for ever—that is, unless one *wants* to leave them alone for ever. But I don't pretend to be an authority upon the subject of love, with all its complications and ramifications; my accomplishments, when I come to reckon them up, are remarkably few in number. I have some knowledge of politics, and a little of gardening, and very little indeed of the game of polo, which I am just going to look on at. Miss Spofforth tells me—and I should think most likely she is right—that I am altogether deficient as regards *savoir vivre* and *savoir faire*. For goodness' sake, don't consult me about your matrimonial difficulties!—my advice wouldn't be worth listening to. If you follow your nose, you will end by reaching some destination; and one is about as good as another. Fifty years hence none of the things that agitate us now will signify the least little bit.'

It is a poor sort of friend who can find nothing better than such cold comfort as that to offer to a perplexed fellow-creature; and Douglas, after taking his leave, said to himself that he had been too hasty in pronouncing Miss Rowley superior to the rest of her sex. He was hurt and piqued; he resolved that for the future he would keep his own affairs to himself; but it never entered his head to imagine that poor Peggy, on her side, might be more deserving of pity than of resentment. If such an idea had entered into his head, he would not have been the simple, honest gentleman that he was.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AT HURLINGHAM.

RUMINATING upon various possible contingencies and combinations, Leonforte went on his way from Clarges Street towards the hotel at which he was sojourning. His way led him down St. James's Street, and, just as he was turning out of that thoroughfare into Pall Mall, he was accosted by a smartly-dressed young gentleman, with a flower in his button-hole, who exclaimed :

'Hullo! How are you? Somebody told me you had left London.'

The Marchese raised his hat ceremoniously; he was not yet habituated to our insular mode of saluting male acquaintances. 'Enchanted to meet you again, Mr. Innes,' said he, in his deep, solemn voice. 'Yes; I have been across to Paris; but I have returned, as you see.'

'Dear me! you haven't been long about it. You saw the Countess, of course; did you give her my message? Look here; if you aren't doing anything particular, will you come into my club and have some lunch? I'm sure you must have lots of interesting things to tell me, if you will. I'm awfully interested in the Countess and in my cousin, you know.'

After a bare second or two of hesitation, Leonforte decided to accept the young man's proffered hospitality. He was at least as much interested in the persons named as Frank Innes could be, and he did not mean to neglect any chance of gaining fresh information about either of them. Consequently, he said what he deemed to be fitting and courteous, and a few minutes later he was eating salmon *mayonnaise* and drinking claret-cup in the strangers' room of Mr. Innes's club, while that gentleman was plying him with questions of which he could not but admire the innocent indiscretion.

He, for his part, was wary and discreet; he thought it undesirable to mention what did not seem to be suspected; he was willing to accept provisionally the character ascribed to him of a disinterested friend of the Countess Radna's; he allowed it to be supposed that he had undertaken that hurried journey to Paris as a peacemaker, and he professed to regret sincerely that he had not found himself able to do anything towards healing a rupture which he feared

was more serious and likely to prove more permanent than Mr. Innes imagined.

'Oh, I expect it will all come right in the long run,' said Frank cheerfully; 'things generally do end by coming all right, unless there's some horrid old woman or other who is bent upon setting them wrong. And there's no old woman in this case, you see.'

He sighed, thinking of his own, in which the malignant influence of a horrid old woman was only too prominent a feature. Presently he began to talk about his own case; for he rather liked this grave Italian, whose eyes had a kindly expression, and he was always ready to confide his secrets to anybody who would listen to them. Perhaps, too, the claret-cup, of which he had partaken much more freely than his abstemious guest had done, may have helped to render him additionally communicative.

Leonforte, when he had been informed at considerable length of the nature of Frank's aspirations and of the well-nigh insuperable difficulties which that sanguine youth did not despair of conquering, opined that Lady Burcote, old and horrid though she might be, could scarcely be blamed for declining to bestow her daughter upon a would-be professional singer. He said:

'Many strange things are done in England; but in no country in the world has it ever been permissible for a lady of rank to marry an actor. Why do you not leave it to be a question of money alone? Poverty, I agree, is an obstacle, and a grave one; still it is not—pardon me the word—it is not derogation.'

'I assure you,' answered Frank, laughing, 'that we consider poverty next door to disgrace, and we have quite given up the idea that there is anything disgraceful in marrying actors or actresses. Lady Burcote wouldn't mind my playing a barrel-organ in the streets if I could show her that I was making ten thousand a year by it.'

The Marchese ventured to express polite incredulity. He could not believe that the description given by Mr. Innes of the British aristocracy was accurate, nor could he imagine that any gentleman, after having thrown up an honourable profession in order to follow such a trade as that of singing in public, would be admitted into a noble family, even though his self-abasement should bring him in so large an income as ten thousand a year.

'And I presume,' he added, 'that you would have to sing a very long time and be very successful before you could gain half or a quarter as much.'

‘Ah! that’s just where it is!’ assented Frank; ‘that’s just the trouble. You’re mistaken in thinking that the Burcotes have any old-fashioned prejudices, though. Douglas agrees with you; but then he’s a bit old-fashioned himself. Miss Rowley, who is more up to date, knows better. By the way, did I introduce you to Miss Rowley?’

Leonforte pricked up his ears. He had not yet been presented to Miss Rowley, and, for reasons which he did not deem it necessary to specify, he was much more eager to be presented to her than to listen any longer to a commonplace narrative of thwarted affections.

‘You omitted to confer a great privilege and a great pleasure upon me,’ he replied. ‘If you contemplated honouring me so far, perhaps I may hope that you will repair the omission at some future date. I have heard a great deal about Miss Rowley, and I should be proud to make her acquaintance.’

‘Oh, you *have* heard of Miss Peggy, then?’ Frank rejoined. ‘Well, I don’t wonder at that, because everybody has heard of her. She’s tremendously clever, and she’s a real good sort into the bargain, in spite of her rough tongue. Would you care to drive out to Hurlingham with me presently? I know she’ll be there, and Hurlingham is one of our national institutions which you ought to see before you publish your impressions of England and the English.’

The Marchese, who took every word that was said to him quite seriously and literally, disclaimed any intention of adding another volume to the many which have been written upon the manners and customs of this island by intelligent foreigners; but he said he should like very much to see Hurlingham and Miss Rowley, and Frank remarked that, in that case, it was about time to call a hansom.

A great many people had adopted a similar course and had betaken themselves to the same destination that afternoon; for, by some strange chance, the weather was fine and warm, although summer was at its height. At the end of a drive during which conversation had languished a little, the unsuspecting Frank and the astute individual towards whom he quaintly imagined that he was acting the part of a sort of juvenile mentor found quite a crowd of fashionable persons looking on at polo in the intervals of social intercourse, and the former generously refused to let his attention be diverted from his immediate purpose by the first

spectacle that met his eyes—which was the displeasing one of Lord Galashiels, engaged in holding a sunshade over the head of Lady Florence Carey. He had not come to Hurlingham in order to see Lady Florence, still less with any hope of being permitted to speak to her; he was a mere spectator, and his anxiety to redeem as speedily as possible the promise that he had made to introduce his companion to Miss Rowley was none the less legitimate because spectators can always fulfil their functions more satisfactorily when they are not hampered by companions.

‘There she is!’ he exclaimed, as soon as his eager scrutiny of the throng had been rewarded by the discovery of the lady for whom he was looking—‘that tall woman in the striped gown. Come along; she’ll be delighted to meet you. She and Douglas Colborne are as thick as thieves, and she understands him a good bit better than I do, I expect. You and she ought to put your heads together and see whether something can’t be done. She’ll represent Douglas and you’ll represent the Countess, don’t you know. And then you can thrash the whole question out between you.’

Leonforte, without moving a muscle, answered that that was a very promising suggestion, and while he was being led up to the lady in the striped gown, he said to himself that he might do worse than begin by assuring her of the high esteem in which he held the newly-appointed member of the British Ministry.

But Peggy, who, as has been related, had heard all about him, and who, as has likewise been related, was not in the best of tempers, cut short his introductory observations somewhat brusquely.

‘Oh, yes; Mr. Colborne is a friend of mine,’ she replied; ‘but I am surprised to hear that he is a friend of yours. I suppose I must have been misinformed; for I was under the impression that you thirsted for his blood.’

This was momentarily embarrassing, but only momentarily so. It was evident that Miss Rowley had already been taken into Mr. Colborne’s confidence; and that fact alone sufficed to throw a vivid light upon their mutual relations. It was also of a nature to throw some light upon the dark path of a tentative schemer. Leonforte smiled and remarked:

‘I perceive that you have been well informed. It is true that, a short time ago, I was Mr. Colborne’s enemy; but I am his enemy no longer. Is it permitted to me to inquire whether that information has been conveyed to you as well?’

Peggy took stock of her questioner, from head to heel, in a leisurely fashion before she made up her mind that it would be beneath her to prevaricate. Then she answered :

‘Mr. Colborne called upon me just now and mentioned that you had been with him. As far as I could understand him, you didn’t seek him out upon a precisely friendly errand ; but possibly I may have mistaken him, or he may have mistaken you. Either way, it doesn’t much matter to me, and I don’t see why it should matter to you. As a general rule, squabbles between husbands and wives are best left alone by outsiders, don’t you think so?’

‘No doubt that is so ; but I can hardly count myself as what you call an outsider. For a time the Countess Radna honoured me with her friendship ; for a time I thought that it was an honour ; I believed in her friendship, and I believed besides that she was a cruelly ill-used lady. I know now, because she herself has told me so, that she simply took advantage of my credulity. She only hoped that I should pick a quarrel with her husband, whom she hates ; and, as it was impossible for me to quarrel with a man who, according to your rules, was justified in refusing to meet me, I have been dismissed and insulted by her. After this personal explanation, which I apologise for intruding upon your notice, you will understand why I cannot remain an outsider as regards the differences between Mr. Colborne and his wife.’

‘Yet,’ observed Peggy, who, during the Marchese’s speech, had been scrutinising the polo-players through her field-glasses, ‘you seem to have been put rather emphatically outside. I haven’t been quite so ruthlessly snubbed as you have been ; still I am not less outside than you are, and I propose to stay where I am. Why shouldn’t I ? The outer air isn’t so very cold, after all.’

‘To some people,’ returned Leonforte, who flattered himself that he had taken his neighbour’s measure, ‘heat is as unendurable as cold, and no temperature is endurable when it is forced upon them. I am one of those people, and I think, Miss Rowley, that you are another. I think you must love the Countess Radna as little as I do. I do not presume to say more.’

‘May I ask,’ inquired Peggy, lowering her glasses and surveying the Italian from beneath half-closed eyelids, ‘what you mean by saying as much ? Because you appear to mean something or other, and I can’t for the life of me guess what it can be.’

‘I mean,’ replied the Marchese, a trifle disconcerted, yet re-

solved not to shrink from timely audacity, 'that the treatment which I have received from the Countess on one side and from Mr. Colborne on the other has opened my eyes. I mean that, instead of loving her—yes, I will own that I once loved her!—I now abhor a woman who could use me as she has used me; and I mean that I am ready to offer you my alliance against her, if you will accept it.'

Peggy stared at the man, who was evidently in earnest and in whose dark eyes there was a fire which could scarcely have been made to illumine them without genuine emotion.

'You are a very unconventional person,' she remarked. 'Perhaps I am a very conventional or a very stupid one; for, even after that excited statement, I am still rather in the dark as to your intentions. I understand that you are in a rage with the Countess Radna; but why you should offer me your alliance against her, or what you expect me to do with it, Heaven alone knows!'

'Ah, Miss Rowley, I am sure that you cannot wish me to put my thought into more distinct language. Is it not enough that all the world is aware of the—shall I say the friendship?—which you feel for Mr. Colborne? That is not my concern, nor can I tell what my alliance may be worth to you. I merely desire to assure you that, such as it is, it is at your service.'

The Marchese was not quite so insane as he may appear in thus addressing a lady of untarnished reputation. He was a poor judge of character; but he was not devoid of that quick instinct which belongs to the Latin races and which, having no mature deliberation to balance it, leads them into occasional absurd errors, as well as into occasional brilliant hits. He knew enough to know that humbug would have no chance of success with Peggy Rowley, whereas unhesitating candour might; and, from his point of view, he was probably right in playing the bold game. Nevertheless, he gained nothing by it, except a rebuke of the severity of which he was not entitled to complain.

'You seem,' observed Miss Rowley, 'to be under a delusion which I humbly trust that all the world doesn't share. All the world—supposing that it had nothing more amusing or interesting to exercise its ingenuity upon—might easily realise your position and why you have so suddenly turned your coat; but I haven't the slightest motive for turning mine, and if I wanted to hurt your former friend and your present foe, I shouldn't look about for an

ally. One would rather not be rude; still one isn't called upon to submit to gratuitous impertinence; so I think, with your permission, our acquaintance shall end here. We needn't make a fuss about it; only when we meet in future we won't speak, if you please.'

There was nothing for Leonforte to do but to take off his hat and retire. He did so with a feeling of bitter resentment in his heart against Miss Rowley which she had scarcely earned. He could not but acknowledge that she had a perfect right to dismiss him contemptuously; yet he was equally unable to allow her credit for the exalted sentiments to which she appeared to lay claim. He blamed his own clumsiness; but that did not prevent him from adding her name to the increasing list of those towards whom he harboured a grudge, and with whom it behoved him, sooner or later, to be even.

He might have felt in some degree comforted, had it been in his power to pierce through the shield of Peggy's assumed composure and to discover that their brief colloquy had been fully as humiliating and as infuriating to her as it had been to him. Peggy reasoned that the man would never have dared to approach her with such hints unless he had had some solid ground to go upon; she was less at her ease as to the verdict of 'all the world' than she had affected to be; she realised that she had been stupid and imprudent; and when Frank Innes strolled up, with a woe-begone face and a dismal account of how he had failed to obtain the faintest sign of recognition from Lady Florence Carey, she turned upon him and snapped at him viciously.

'I wish to goodness,' she exclaimed, 'you would devote your time to your business of practising scales, instead of coming here to worry people who have deserved better treatment at your hands! I can't make Florence Carey speak to you, if she doesn't want to speak to you. And please don't introduce any more foreign adventurers to me: I don't like the breed.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

INCORRUPTIBLE PETER.

To be at enmity with several individuals who are, or ought to be, at enmity with one another, to have been spurned by each and all

of them, and to discern no existing means of inflicting annoyance upon any of them, is not a very satisfactory state of affairs for a vindictive person to face. But Leonforte was patient as well as vindictive; he argued that something must needs happen before long, and he resigned himself to provisional inactivity, to remaining on the spot, and to awaiting the course of events. It was simple and not altogether unpleasant to remain upon the spot. He would even have enjoyed himself, if his unsatisfied vengeance, his smouldering wrath and his wounded pride had not kept him in a constant condition of mental disease; for the society of the British capital showed him much kindness and hospitality. He profited by the introductions which he had obtained from the Countess Radna; he renewed friendly relations with Lord and Lady Burcote; his high respectability was vouched for at the Italian Embassy; and if all the entertainments to which he was bidden did not entertain him, they at least rendered him the service of leaving him with no idle time upon his hands.

Every now and then he encountered Miss Rowley, who stared over his head; once or twice he exchanged a passing salute with the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and he frequently met and conversed with Frank Innes, who continued to be communicative. But he did not, as the days and weeks went on, learn very much more about these people than he already knew. There had been, it appeared, a certain amount of gossip respecting Mr. Colborne and Miss Rowley; only it had languished for want of fuel. Mr. Colborne was not often seen at social gatherings, and Peggy was perhaps too popular to be made the subject of an organised attack.

The truth was that a decided coolness had come over the intimacy of two people who ought to have known much better than to listen to any voices save those of their respective consciences. To the collective voice of her own sex, which seemed to have pronounced her imprudent, it was, no doubt, advisable that Peggy should pay some heed; but there could not be any necessity for her to go out of her way to treat an old and unoffending friend with marked incivility, and the old and unoffending friend did not like it. Feminine voices penetrated also to his ears, insinuating that Miss Rowley was angry with him because she was disappointed in him. Some of the insinuated reasons for her disappointment he did not choose to understand; but others sounded plausible. It could not be denied that she was ambitious and inclined to be arbitrary; more than once she had attempted to

shape a political course for him ; there was nothing so very extravagant in the suggestion that she had aimed at securing a personal representative in the Administration and had been disgusted to find that all her exertions towards the attainment of that end had been thrown away. If that was the case, she must be left to recover herself and to reach a more reasonable frame of mind at her leisure : he really could not gratify her by asking her advice as to the conduct of public affairs. Thus it came to pass that a couple of human beings who, between them, could boast of considerably more common sense than is allotted to any ordinary half-dozen of our species allowed themselves to be estranged in deference to the cackle of a flock of geese.

One of them sought and found consolation in work ; the other, having no special work assigned to her by Providence, could not be happy unless she was befriending somebody ; and, as it was no longer possible for her to befriend Douglas Colborne, she not unnaturally turned her attention to Frank Innes. She could not, to be sure, encourage that love-lorn youth in his absurd aspirations ; it was her duty to discourage him, and she told him so ; but at the same time she did not see that duty compelled her to refuse him her sympathy. He had done nothing wrong ; he was the victim of circumstances and of an artificial state of society ; if it comforted him to call upon her from time to time and pour forth the tale of his alternate hopes and misgivings, the least that she could do was to concede that small comfort to a distressed fellow-creature.

Towards the end of the season, however, it occurred to her that she might permissibly do a little more than that for him. Frank was now a free man, inasmuch as he had resigned his Government clerkship ; he was studying the art of vocal interpretation under competent instructors, and he talked vaguely of visiting Germany or Italy before making his formal *début* ; but his plans were as yet quite unsettled, and it did not seem improbable that he might care to spend a week or ten days at Swinford Manor after everybody should have left London. Upon the eve of her own departure, therefore, Peggy gave him an invitation which was instantly and gratefully accepted. He did not know, or if he did know, he had forgotten, that Burcote Hall was situated at a distance of barely eight miles from Swinford Manor ; much less could he, under his present sentence of banishment, be aware that the noble owner of that demesne (which had been let for several years past) proposed

to spend the summer months there, having failed to find a fresh tenant. Frank jumped at Miss Rowley's proffered hospitality because he had a secret hope that her kindness of heart might prompt her to show a similar favour to Lady Florence; but Peggy, who harboured no such nefarious design, thought it only fair to warn him that he must expect to be bored.

'There will be nothing for you to do,' she said, 'and nobody for you to see, except a few tedious fellow-guests. Still it will be open to you to bolt as soon as you have had enough of us; the Great Western Railway provides frequent fast trains.'

Inwardly she reflected: 'It won't be any fault of mine if he chances to meet the girl; I don't keep a prison or a school, and I can't prevent my friends from roaming about the country when they are staying with me. Not that she can possibly marry him; only an interview might cheer him up for the time being, and might embolden her to refuse her ennobled manufacturer once more. One would be justified in doing anything one could towards rendering her that real service.'

That a superior woman like Peggy Rowley should have allowed herself to indulge in casuistry of that description is, of course, only one more unneeded instance of the perverse workings of the female mind; but it must be said for her that she honestly had not anticipated meeting the Burcotes at a flower-show in Lord Winkfield's grounds to which Frank was dragged, somewhat against his will, on the afternoon following that of his arrival under her roof. There they were, nevertheless; and Lord Galashiels was with them; and, as the most watchful of mothers can hardly manage to exercise constant supervision in a throng of two or three hundred people, it was eventually found practicable by an adroit young man to approach a lady who had not bowed to him, but who, he felt quite sure, was aware of his proximity. Lady Florence had escaped into one of the orchid-houses, and was bending, with an interest slightly too intense to be altogether genuine, over a superb odontoglossum, when Frank's voice whispered close to her ear:

'Won't you speak to me?'

She answered in a rapid undertone and without turning round, 'I shall get into the most awful row that ever was if I do. You had better go away before Mamma comes and catches sight of you; I don't think she has seen you yet. What in the world has brought you here?'

Miss Rowley's waggonette. I'm on a visit to her; but I little

imagined that such a piece of luck as this was in store for me. I wonder whether *she* did ! Anyhow, nothing will induce me to stir from this spot, unless you'll come too. *Do* come !—if it's only for five minutes. There are lots of shrubberies and places which your mother won't think of searching.'

Lady Florence glanced over her shoulder and shook her head. 'I couldn't do it !' she murmured ; 'it would be as much as my life was worth ! I have been forbidden to speak to you or take any notice of you. Did you think I had cut you all this time of my own accord ?'

'I didn't know ; I hoped you hadn't. But it's awfully hard work to keep up one's faith when one hasn't, after all, any absolute promise to fall back upon. You did promise me, though, that you wouldn't be bullied into marrying Galashiels, whatever might happen.'

'Oh, no ; I'm sure I never made such a promise as that,' returned the girl hurriedly ; 'you must have forgotten what I said. You talk about its being hard to keep faith ; but you don't know how much harder it is for me than it can possibly be for you. I wish I could tell you—but I can't ; because Mamma will have noticed by this time that I have given her the slip, even if she hasn't noticed that you are here.'

Lady Burcote, indeed, gave evidence of her vigilance by entering the hothouse at that moment. She was arrayed in a costume quite as juvenile as, and far more costly than, that which Lady Florence wore ; she was attended by one of those middle-aged young men who had admired her in years gone by and whose gallantries were still acceptable to her. If she saw Frank Innes, she did not appear to do so, and she passed her arm through her daughter's after a sprightly and companionable fashion which she had often found to be effective in its influence upon bystanders. Lady Burcote is not and never has been respected ; but she is not, never has been, and never will be, a contemptible antagonist. The lives of an appreciable section of our fellow-mortals are made or marred in accordance with the goodwill and pleasure of Lady Burcote and her congeners.

Frank, at all events, could do nothing to prevent this unscrupulous lady from drawing her daughter away from him, nor could he, during the remainder of the afternoon, obtain a second opportunity of approaching Lady Florence. Yet it was simply essential and indispensable that he should ascertain what she had been going to say to him when that old harridan of a mother of

hers had interrupted her, because there could be no question as to the fact that she had been going to say something interesting and important. He dogged her footsteps; but there was not much use in doing that, since her mother and Galashiels clung to her like a couple of leeches; she ignored him persistently from first to last; and the only thing that gave him a spice of comfort was that he saw her talking for nearly ten minutes to Miss Rowley's gardener, who was present in a professional capacity. She could not have been talking to the man about flowers all that time; so the chances were that she had some previous acquaintance with him. Peter Chervil did not look like a particularly valuable link; still he might prove to be a sort of a link, and it might prove worth while to cultivate him. Straws will not save a drowning man; yet drowning men are said to clutch at them, and Frank, metaphorically speaking, determined to clutch Peter Chervil by the hair.

It was in pursuance of this resolution that he rose, next day, long before the breakfast hour and strolled across the wide expanse of lawn which encompasses Swinford Manor. Not a word had been said by his hostess, in the meantime, concerning an encounter of which it might be assumed that she was not ignorant; but certain remarks of a disquieting nature had been made, during dinner on the foregoing evening, by irresponsible and innocent persons. It appeared to be taken for granted that Lady Burcote proposed to marry her daughter to Lord Galashiels, and it likewise appeared to be an understood thing that when Lady Burcote proposed, no power, human or divine, could prevent her from disposing. Her ladyship had not been gently handled; her worldliness and cruelty had been duly condemned, while her daughter's reluctance to be thus summarily settled in life had been pronounced notorious; but it had been agreed that the matron would triumph over the maid, and Peggy's voice had not been raised in dissent.

All this gave Frank food for gloomy reflection and debarred him from appreciating the dewy freshness of early morn. Two men were hard at work with a mowing-machine and a booted pony; further on he came upon one who was engaged in cutting roses for the house, and looked as sad over it as gardeners always do over that painful, necessary operation; but it was not until he had perambulated three conservatories that he ran to earth the individual of whom he was in search. Peter glanced up, touched his hat and said:

'Fine mornin', sir.'

'Very,' answered Frank. 'Didn't I see you at the flower-show yesterday afternoon?'

'You might ha' done, sir. I were there; though I didn't see nothin' as I couldn't ha' beat out o' my own houses. Fact is, sir, I didn't go so much for to see any blooms as they could show me as because I heard tell as Lady Florence was to be there.'

'Oh, you know Lady Florence then?' said Frank, pricking up his ears.

'Known her since she worn't scarcely so 'igh as your walkin'-stick, sir. My old aunt Eliza, as is bedridden now up at the almshouses at Stoke Morton, she was nurse in the fam'ly, and terrible anxious she is for to see Lady Florence once more afore her time comes. Which it can't be far distant now, sir. So I thought as I'd try to get a word with her ladyship, who spoke very kind to me and said she'd make it a point to drive over to Stoke Morton in her pony-shay some mornin'. Leastways, if they'd let her go; for she's kep' uncommon tight, as you know, sir. And as for that there Lord Gally—somethin' or other, soon as ever I see him I says, "Don't tell me he's a lord," I says; "lords is gentlemen," I says. "Radical I am," says I, "and Radical I shall vote, without good cause is shown me to the contrary; but like should mate with like, and when it comes to makin' lords out of tradesmen and marryin' of 'em to the best blood in the land—why," I says, "'tis enough to make a man turn Tory." Now I ain't onreasonable, nor yet I don't say but what 'tis fittin' as her ladyship should look for a rich 'usband; on'y I can't hardly credit as her father and mother 'd force her to take up with a feller like that, lord or no lord. I'd a deal sooner see her married to a gentleman sim'lar to yourself, sir, if you'll excuse the liberty of my mentionin' it. "For Mr. Innes," I says, "he ~~is~~ a gentleman; though maybe he's pore—like a many gentlemen is nowadays."

Anglo-Indians affirm that political intelligence is disseminated through the native bazaars with a rapidity which sometimes outstrips the telegraph-wires and for which it is impossible to account. Yet marvels of a kindred nature are perpetually occurring in our own country. One cannot say for certain how servants obtain their accurate social information, though one may have suspicions; but there seems to be no doubt that they are quite as well posted up as we are, and it was evident that Peter Chervil knew as much about Lady Florence Carey as Mr. Innes could tell him. The latter was far from being offended with Miss Rowley's gardener on

that account : on the contrary, he inwardly showered blessings upon the man's head, and said aloud :

‘Mr. Chervil, you are a very sensible man, and I can see that your heart is in the right place, notwithstanding the dreadful mistake that you make in voting Radical. But perhaps you won't vote Radical next time—when you have had leisure to think things over, you know. Meanwhile, I am sure you would willingly do anything in your power to save Lady Florence from Lord Galashiels, who, as you truly say, is not in the least a gentleman, in spite of his being a lord. And you might do something—perhaps it wouldn't be much, still it would be something—if you could manage to convey a note to her from me. The truth is that I have a few rather important things to say to her, and I can't possibly get them said without an undisturbed interview of a quarter of an hour or thereabouts. I could easily slip over to Stoke Morton, you see, if I only knew on what morning she was likely to visit her old nurse ; and I should think you might find out that for me ; and—er——’

Here Frank significantly thrust his finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket—which gesture showed an imperfect discrimination of character on his part. .

Peter, whose weatherbeaten features had relaxed into a grim smile, drew back a step and frowned when he noticed it : ‘None o' that, if you please, sir !’ said he, with dignity. ‘What I does, I does for reasons o' my own, not for pay. Carryin' of notes unbeknown is a ticklish job, and if I was to stoop to such courses, 't wouldn't be for the sake of a gentleman as thought he could buy me.’

Ample apologies had to be offered and ample explanations entered upon before Frank finally prevailed upon this incorruptible personage to deliver the few hastily-pencilled lines which he scribbled upon a leaf of his note-book while he was talking ; but Peter ended by undertaking a commission with which he was secretly rejoiced to be charged.

‘Mind you, sir,’ said the old man sternly, as he took the folded slip of paper handed to him, ‘I don't know what this 'ere bit o' writin' may be, nor I don't want to know, nor I don't pay no heed whatsoever to all you've been tellin' of me. I ain't one to meddle with the concerns o' my betters, nor never was. But Lord Gally-what's-his-name, I don't count him no better o' mine—barrin' the money as his father made by cheatin' of his customers. And that's where 'tis, do you see, sir.’

The motive assigned might have been more lucidly put; but, under the circumstances, Frank felt able to dispense with lucidity, and he returned to the house thanking his lucky stars. He certainly had not expected, when he had sought out Mr. Peter Chervil, to meet with so willing and so capable a plenipotentiary.

Nor, for the matter of that, did he expect to receive so prompt a reply to his missive as that which was delivered to him the same evening. It was with no such hope—or, at all events, with only the faintest shadow of a shade of it—that he strolled out towards the conservatories before dinner, after a long, weary day, during which he had striven, much against the grain, to make himself agreeable to his fellow-guests. But there, sure enough, was Mr. Chervil; and not a muscle of Mr. Chervil's face relaxed as he produced a note from his pocket. 'Her ladyship's orders as I was to give this to you, sir,' said Peter, and immediately walked away.

Now, these were the words inscribed, in a somewhat unformed handwriting, upon the correspondence-card which Frank's eager eyes scrutinised a dozen times, although one perusal might well have sufficed to render its purport intelligible:

'I shall go and see old Eliza on Wednesday morning between eleven and twelve o'clock, and if you were in the churchyard afterwards, we might meet for a few minutes. Only please squat down behind a tombstone, because the little imp of a groom whom I shall have with me is as sharp as a needle. It is all very wrong and rather dangerous; but *for once* I don't mind chancing it. Peter is an old dear; you may give him a kiss from me, if you like.'

Frank did not think that he would like to kiss Peter Chervil; but there was somebody else upon whom he was exceedingly anxious to bestow that mark of regard, and for whose sake he was more than willing to conceal himself for any length of time in a village grave-yard. He was in such good spirits during dinner and conversed with so much brilliancy, that Peggy Rowley soon formed certain shrewd conjectures which she took very good care not to put into words. Only, when she wished him goodnight, she remarked:

'I'm glad you are enjoying yourself. All the same, there's no real reason why you should enjoy yourself, and you had better not cherish illusions. Depend upon it, my poor friend, there's nothing but disappointment to look forward to.'

But Frank did not see how she could possibly know

(To be continued.)

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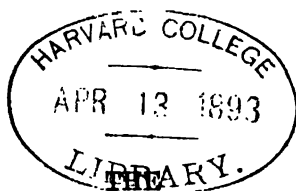
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CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

APRIL 1898.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,
AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A MEETING.

TING! ting! ting!

The clock on the stairs struck three. Three in the afternoon. And then the chimes in it began :

There is nae luck about the house,
There is nae luck ava'.

The clock had been an acquisition of Captain Curgenven, a lover of mechanism.

Theresa started and shivered.

She was in her boudoir, seated by a small fire, in a dream. At her entreaty Percival had gone back to the Tregonticks along with Justinian for the rabbit shooting. He was reluctant to leave her, but she had insisted. She assured him that it would worry her to think he was detained from his sports, that her mind would be more easy if he went, that she was much better after a night's rest. Percival, always disposed to be sanguine, acquiesced at once in the notion that she was better. He was confident that in two she would be herself again. He held that the exaggerated her condition. Doctors always do such as to enhance their merits if they cure the malady. Percival was less willing to accept his dismissal. Noting his confidence, there lurked a doubt at the bottom of

'Dear old T——,' said he, 'I can't go and amuse myself when you are ill, and moping in your sick room. 'Pon my life, I shan't enjoy it, I shall be thinking about you.'

Nevertheless she persuaded him to go; she wished it, and her will was the stronger of the two. He promised to be home for dinner, and Theresa undertook to come down to dinner at half-past seven.

He had been away since eleven, and had lunched at the house of the Tregonticks.

As the afternoon crept on, so did Theresa's uneasiness. At four o'clock Physic would be at Tolmenna with the original will, and if it was to be secured, it must be secured then by her. The strokes of the clock on the stairs announcing three came on her like the shock of an earthquake. The decisive moment had arrived when she must go. It mattered not that she was unfit to go, go she must. An interview was before her certain profoundly to agitate her, at a time when she was warned to avoid all agitation. Nevertheless she must run the risk.

She opened the door and stole lightly down the great staircase, walking on the deep pile carpet, and her tread awaking no sound. No one was in the hall.

She had thrown a kerchief over her head, and drawing this closely round her, she went out on the terrace. There was no one about there, and she went to the Bungalow without encountering anyone, or observing anyone, either in the grounds or at a window of the house, the fact being that an Italian boy with a barrel organ and a monkey in an evening dress suit and white tie was at the back door, and servants, gardeners, and grooms had rushed into the kitchen yard to observe the antics of the creature. Theresa could hear the strains of the instrument, and now and then a squeal from a servantmaid, as the monkey ran to her and pulled her apron.

She entered the Bungalow and pushed into the smoking-room, where she hastily took down one of the pistols hung on the rack against the wall, concealed it, and left the Bungalow in the direction of the moor. Her heart was beating fast. The pulses bounded in her throat, and she gasped for breath. But no sooner was she outside the park walls and on the open common than her courage returned, and her heart beat more evenly. She looked round. What a wonderful country that was! In our great cities the mansion of a millionaire and the house crowded with squalid

and starving wretches are within a stone's throw. Here was wild and barren country untouched as in the times when the first savage inhabitants of Britain roved there, and behind the paling—divided by that only—the richest park land, growing cedars and oaks and chestnuts of centuries, on land cultivated through ages, and become docile to the hand of the landscape gardener of the nineteenth century. A thousand years—nay, two thousand intervened between this side and that of the park wicket. Within the gate you and the scenery belonged to the present epoch, outside it—in your modern costume and with your modern ideas—you are an anachronism.

But that was not all. A step from among the trees on to the moor was a step from one atmosphere into another; from the warm, sleepy, soft air of the south into the bracing, stimulating cold air of the north; it was a stride from one latitude to another. Nor was that all. It was a passage from one flora to another; from garden flowers of flaming hue, from spreading forest trees, to pale heather and bog asphodel, to grey moss and lichen soot-black or snow white, and to no sign of tree other than a stunted thorn.

The afternoon was windy; clouds, white, piled up in masses, sailed as icebergs in the cold dark-blue sky, and cast indigo shadows over the moorland. Between the cloud masses the sun fell over stretches of barren waste, lighting it a pale sulphurous yellow. There had been rain. Some of the heavy clouds had burst and poured forth a deluge. Even now to the west all was a blur of blue grey cut by the half-arch of a rainbow.

It seemed to Theresa, as she walked on the springy turf, that her sickness had passed away, that with the fresh moor air she inhaled new strength. Discouragement was gone, she was sanguine of success. Physic was a coward. She had but to frighten him, and he would give way. The jewel-case she had with her, under her cloak and left arm. It was locked, and she had left the key at home in her desk.

The lapwings were wheeling and screaming, and now and then came the pipe of the curlew. A ringouzel started up as Theresa approached some old streaming works, flew a little way, circled, uttered a plaintive remonstrance, rose, flew a little further, again remonstrated, and continued the same course for some distance, then gave it up and disappeared.

Theresa's way led past the Hurlers, rings of upright stones planted in a prehistoric period for an unknown purpose. Three of

these circles remain ; a line of stones has been destroyed that at one time stretched across the moor to it, only two of these having been spared, standing about five and a half feet above the ground. The story goes that one Sunday the men of three parishes met on the moor to hurl a silver ball, and see which parish sent forth the man who was the best hurler. But as an interlude they began to throw stones, and they threw the granite slabs to the top of the nearest hill, one on top of the other, which stand to this day, and now constitute the Cheeswring. Then the men of two of the parishes, Linkinghorne and Southill, were faint, and said they would throw no more till they had drunk ale. So they sent off two of their party to run for jars of beer. Then the wrath of heaven was kindled against the Sabbath-breakers, and all were turned into stone, and at a distance from the three circles are to be seen the two messengers petrified in the act of running.¹ In the flying lights and shadows there was something startling in the appearance of these clusters of standing stones about the height of a man, some black with lichen, others white with spar, now dark against a background of moor that lay in sunshine, themselves overshadowed by a sailing cloud. Then the condition was reversed, all the waste behind steeped in purple, these stones gleaming out like ghosts in a dance ; and in the rapidly shifting light and shades they seemed endowed with motion, to be tossing, and lightly careering in circle, whilst the two out-runners in stooping position actually appeared to advance in their race for ale. No wonder that the place is avoided at night as 'whisht,' when even by day it has such an unearthly aspect.

But Theresa had no thoughts to bestow on bird or stone ; she hugged the precious case to her side, and with her right hand felt the pistol that she had passed through the leather girdle round her waist.

She could not stand still without feeling the earth heave and lurch under her feet, and her head spin. But whilst walking she was unconscious of her weakness ; she was animated by the hope to have done for ever with the annoyance caused by Physic. She had resolved, as soon as she had got the will from him, that she would persuade Percival to dismiss the man from his service. One so unscrupulous in the matter of the will would be unscrupulous in other matters.

Theresa had hardly reached Tolmenna before Physic arrived,

¹ So the story as told the author near the spot.

riding up on a grey cob. He wore tight breeches and boots. In his hand was a crop. He had on a long great coat.

‘How do, ma’am?’ said he with an insolently familiar nod as he trotted past. ‘I’ll hitch up and be at your service directly.’ Then changing his mind he drew rein. ‘I say—I heard a rumour that your ladyship was ill, so I e’en rode to Curgenvén to inquire. They told me you were better, but not fit to come downstairs. On my word, I didn’t expect to see you here, after that. I came on to have a look at my bit of property, where I’m going to open a mine.’ He turned his keen eyes round, raised his voice, and shouted, ‘Halloo there! What, you gal! what are you doing on my lands? I’ll have you up for trespass. Weeping, like Marius, over the ruins; hanging up your harp on the willow trees, eh?’ This to Esther, whom his sharp eye had detected.

He was off his cob in a minute. ‘Look here, gal,’ said he, ‘you take the bridle and lead my grey up and down, and I’ll give you a fourpenny bit, which is more money than you have earned honestly so far, and having got will know how to spend.’

He threw the rein to Esther, who came forward sullenly and doubtfully, and seemed inclined to refuse. When, however, she saw that Physic wished to speak to Mrs. Curgenvén, she took the rein with an impatient jerk of the hand and a toss of her head.

‘Now look here, young savage,’ said Physic. ‘I’ve a word or two with this lady here that ain’t for your ears. It’s about the mine, it is, I’m going to open here, wheal¹ something or other. I’ll call it after her, whatever her Christian name is, with her good permission, and that’s what I’ll ask her, so sheer off to leeward.’

Esther looked at Theresa with inquiry, and when she saw that it was the lady’s desire that she should comply with the orders given, she led the horse away in the direction of the Hurlers, and a mass of granite fragments heaped into a cairn hid her from the agent and Theresa.

‘So then,’ said Physic, ‘you’ve come notwithstanding sickness, or was that put on, eh? You don’t relish the prospect of turning out into the cold. I would not were I in the squire’s place or yours. By George! it makes me laugh to think how cleverly you played your little game. I confess I was taken aback, and could not understand it when you gave me the sack. “Why!” said I to myself, “confound the woman, is she demented? Here is she without a penny to bless herself with, and when she gets an offer

¹ Wheal (huel) is Cornish for mine.

from me—an offer at which ten thousand girls would jump—she refuses me.” I couldn’t make out the sense of it. I knew you were clever. I didn’t know how clever. I allow you, I was sore when I heard that Mr. Percival had succeeded in securing you, or rather that you had succeeded in securing him. But I laughed. It was darned clever, and it explained the puzzle. However, you don’t escape scot free. You’ll have to pay me for the honour and enjoyment of being squires of Curgenven. So now—which is it to be—a thousand pound cheque or the jewel box?’

‘Have you brought the will?’

‘Rather think I have.’

‘Not a copy? The original?’

‘Do you doubt me? Fair dealing is my word.’

‘Mr. Physic,’ said Theresa, ‘I have been ill, and ordered by the doctor not to be excited, or to be troubled about any matter, as my heart is affected. I have come here this evening at great risk to myself, and I ask you, under the circumstances, to give me a little longer time in which to consider what you have said, and the alternatives set before me.’

‘Not another day, not another hour! Very sorry, ’pon my soul I am, that you’ve been ill. I can see it in your handsome face that you ain’t up to mark. But, bless you! it’s like having a tooth drawn, the worst is the making up your mind to it. It’s the thinking over them beautiful diamonds and emeralds as has upset you. Of course it is. A lady don’t fancy parting with such things as those. It is like taking the blood out of her heart. I’m tremendously sorry you have been worried over them jewels, but it comes in the course of business. It’s a deal; you give me the jewels and I’ll give you the will. I reckon it’s worth more to you to have the will than to have a few trays of gewgaws. Why—the will means a comfortable house, a fine estate, and a position as a county lady. You will have the means of buying other jewelry—any amount of sham, and who’s to tell that it is sham? I know what you’re afraid of—lest these should be asked after. Leave that to me. I’ll get you shams as’ll pass very well. You haven’t said a word to the squire, I suppose, about this affair?’

Theresa shook her head. She had drawn her long dark cloak about her, and wrapped it round her with her arms crossed under the cloak. Very white and deathlike her face appeared by contrast with the black cloth cloak. The cloak was one Percival had given her, a Belgian cloak, such as is worn by the women in the

markets of Bruges and Ghent, with a silk-lined hood, and a brass clasp at the breast. She had tied a purple silk kerchief over her hair, knotted under her chin.

'You insist on the things being settled at once?' she asked in a low tone, and slowly.

'Most assuredly. Look here. I'm going to work a company and have a mine here, and I need money to set the affair on wheels.'

'Let me look at the will.'

He put his hand into a pocket of his long great coat, a pocket on the inside, and drew forth a packet.

'Here you are,' said he. 'And I pray you to observe that I have got capacious pockets. I came provided so that I could stow the jewel case away in one of them.'

'Give me the will.'

'Thank you,' said Physic with a laugh, 'give you the will, and away you would run fleet as a doe, thinking to make off with it, and without fulfilling your part of the bargain. How am I to know that you have brought the jewel case with you?'

'Satisfy yourself with your own eyes.'

Theresa drew forth the case and held it before her.

'Very well,' said the agent. 'So far so good. Now, you put that in my hand, and I will put the document you so covet into yours. We'll deliver up simultaneously.'

Slapping his boot with his crop he turned and looked about him. Esther was not visible, but the cob was; she had thrown herself down on the granite cairn, and was allowing the cob to munch the grass as far as he could reach, restrained by her hand and the bridle, that she had unbuckled on one side of the bit.

'It's all right,' said Physic. He put the whip into his mouth, across, and held out the will with one hand whilst laying hold eagerly of the case with the other.

Theresa at once secured the will in her bosom.

'Wait—my beauty!' said the agent, removing the whip from his mouth, 'I've not done yet. Where is the key?'

'Here!' exclaimed Theresa, suddenly drawing the pistol, and presenting it at his head.

Physic sprang back.

'Now,' said Theresa, 'give me back the case immediately.'

'Oh, yes,' answered the agent, recovering himself. 'A pretty trick for a stage player. But it won't do; you can't scare me. Why, bless you! you ain't got the pistol cocked, much less charged.'

Theresa at once drew back the cock.

‘Give me up the jewel case!’

Physic whirled his crop about to bring it down across her hand. ‘You hit me once across the knuckles,’ said Physic savagely; ‘now I’ll pay you with interest. By George! I’ll give you a wale across them lily-whites!’

He swung the crop again, and set his teeth. In a moment, before the blow fell, there was an explosion.

✓ Theresa saw the flash, felt the shock in her hand without understanding what had happened; saw Physic stagger, as though tipsy, and fall in a heap on the sward.

CHAPTER XLIV.

OFF.

THERESA stood like one of the Hurlers or Runners, motionless, petrified. She could not realise at once what had happened; she was not conscious of having drawn the trigger. Her finger had contracted instinctively before the fall of the whip. That the pistol was loaded had not entered her imagination. She had forgotten altogether that Esther had charged it, offered it to her, and, when she had declined to experimentalise with it, had replaced it loaded on the rack a few days ago. She had thought to frighten Physic, certainly not to kill him. He lay motionless before her, with a bullet in his heart. Theresa’s senses were sharpened to acuteness at that moment; she saw, and heard, and smelt with preternatural keenness—saw Physic on the ground, with two boot-soles turned towards her, and saw that the sole of one boot had been patched, and that the patching nails were bright; she heard the cob whinny; and she smelt gunpowder. But she could not think; she could not put together the chain of events, and understand how this terrible accident had taken place. She was roused by the voice of Esther.

‘Oh, jimmeny! You’ve done it!’

She tried to turn her head and to speak; she could do neither. Esther went to the fallen man, touched him, looked in his face, and came back to Theresa.

‘He’s dead, I reckon, dead as a want (mole) on a linney (cattle-shed) door. Whativer is to be done?’

Theresa was in no condition to speak.

'I say—now,' Esther looked at the dead man, then at the lady, 'tes a hanging matter, I reckon. Lord! I often said as I would like to do it, and do it I would; but now 'tes done, it's another matter altogether, and I never 'd ha' picked up courage to do it. But, Lor'! what is to be done now? It'll niver do for them to take you to prison and hang you—a lady, and so good. I'll tell 'ee what—I'll take it all on myself. Ees—I will for sure sartain, and let'm try to catch me. They won't do it. There, lady! don't y' take on and be afraid. I'll pretend I did it; and if they do hang me, it's no great odds, I'm sure.'

Theresa did not stir, she remained stupefied with terror; then Esther laid hold of her arm, shook her, and walked with her a few paces away from the corpse.

'Look ye here,' said Esther, 'what do y' mean now by holding thickey pistern? Why, them as seed y' wi' her sure enough would say you did it. Give her to me.'

She twisted the weapon out of the hand of Theresa, who now drew a long breath, and put up her hand to her brow. When her eyes no longer rested on the body with the upturned patched boot-soles, her spellbound condition began to yield.

'It couldn't be helped,' said Esther, reassuringly. 'I reckon that when gran'mither cast the eye on him and ill-wished him, it were sure to come from one or other. He ought never to ha' turned us out o' Tolmenna. He brought it on his own head. What had he done to y' that you took the pistern to'n? But never mind, you can tell me that another day. Now be peart (smart), and get back to Curgenven, and leave the rest to me.'

Theresa was in that condition in which obedience to another's will was the only course she could take. She could neither think for herself, nor consider the consequences of what had taken place; she therefore drew her cloak about her with a cramp-like spasm, and walked in the direction indicated by Esther, at first slowly, hardly dragging one foot after the other, then quicker, and finally almost at a run. As she placed distance between herself and the corpse, animation returned, her muscles became flexible, her pulses throbbed, and the terror, instead of striking her with paralysis, became a goad urging her to fly the spot. Panting, shuddering, bathed in perspiration, she passed through the park, re-entered the house, and regained her room unnoticed. When there she divested herself of kerchief and cloak, put them away, and then sank into her chair, covered her eyes, and burst into tears.

Wherever she went, whatever she undertook, she was led into disaster; she had, however, never previously been brought into such a situation as the present, that threatened not herself only, but the whole family into which she had been taken.

In the meanwhile Esther had stepped back to the body; she knelt beside it, and assured herself that life was extinct. Then she stood with folded arms, her feet in a heather bush, musing, and looking at the dead man. She had the pistol in her hand. She was not oppressed with any of the horror or fear that had taken hold of Theresa. In her rude mind she was not capable of realising all that death was. The man who had sent her grandfather to prison, who had turned the old people and herself out of their house and had torn it down, was lying dead before her, and he had been served as he deserved. He was now innocuous, and the main thought that occupied her mind was whether it would now be possible for her grandparents to return to Tolmenna and rebuild the ruins. She had hated the agent, and yet, as he lay before her dead, with his ugly face turned to the light, and the flying shadows and sungleams dancing over it, she was conscious of a sense of pity.

'Deary me, now!' said she. 'Tes curious. I couldn' kill the hoodwall, and I took aim at'n. I reckon 'twere this very pistern; and sure then I said I'd never 'a missed had I fired at Physic. But I'm not so sartain neither now if he'd 'a stood facin' me as I'd 'a had the sperit to do it. Deary life, it's edication does it. There's me can't read vitty at all, and the lady there—as easy as anything. Her shot'n—straight on end. It's edication does it.'

She stooped and looked at Physic once more, and now saw the jewel case that had fallen from his hand in the convulsion of death.

She recognised this at once, and wondered how he had come by it. She took it up, and going to the ruins of the cottage secreted it in a place she well knew under the floor, where her grandfather had been accustomed to hide his money.

Then she walked away in the direction of cultivated land.

As she was descending from the moor into a lane she met Pike the horsebreaker, leading Physic's cob by the rein.

'I say, Esther Morideg! Have y' seen Mr. Physic anywheres? Here's his cob running loose. He passed my house not an hour ago, and said to my missus he were going to Tolmenna about his mine. I caught the cob running down the lane.'

'Physic is dead!' said Esther. 'I've shot'n; and here's the pistern. Take it back to Curgenven.'

'You've shot him?'

'Aye, I reckon. Why did he turn gran'fer out o' the house? What else could he expect, and ill-wished too by gran'mother!'

'Physic dead!'

'Aye! and here be the pistern as have done it. I borrowed her t'other day I were i' the Bungalow up to Curgenven, and I took away the pistern wi' me. I thought I'd punish that chap for turning us out o' our house, and tearing it abroad. I've done it, and there be the tool back. They'll be after me to put me i' the clink, I reckon, so I'm off.'

She gave him the pistol.

'No, thank you,' said he. 'They'll be having me pinned up if they find me wi' that. You come along of me to where there's someone else and tell the tale, and then it's right enough.'

'Very well.'

'Come along to the old turnpike, my missus 'll hear what you have to say, and then you can leave the pistol there and welcome, but I wi'n't take it wi'out a witness, and risk the noose round my neck. He were an aggravating sort o' a chap, he were, and I don't blame you. He didn't treat your folks as 'a ought to 'a treated 'em, and this be the consekence. Well, it's a pity if they swing you, and a shame too. But I've gotten all I wanted from Physic, and so I don't bear him a grudge. If it 'd been your gran'fer as 'ad done it, I shouldn't ha' been surprised, but it's lively games for a giglot (young girl).'

As Pike walked alongside of Esther he turned his eyes out of their corners to observe her. She strode along the lane with light tread, upright as a wand, easy in every movement, her head erect, covered with its dense cloud of shining hair.

A sense of compunction came over him. This handsome girl—was he to be the means of bringing her to her death? He would not have liked to ride a well-formed colt so as to break its wind or throw it down and cut its knees, and he did not relish the thought of having a hand in the destruction of so splendid a girl.

'I say, Esther,' he began, 'I don't care to ha' naught to do wi't.'

'Wi' what, maister?'

'Why, sure enough, wi' your being hanged. I don't say but wi' the agravation, Physic desarved it all, and that I wouldn't 'a

done the like myself in a like agravation, but I'm not over pleased to put my fingers into the matter.'

'It won't hurt y'.'

'No—it won't hurt me. But I don't care to have to appear against you, maiden, and mebbe say what may cause you to swing. I shu'dn't be easy after.'

'You needn't be afeared, Turnypike, they'll niver catch me. How can they? There's nobody knows the moor as I do. Why—if I ran out over Trewortha marsh, could they follow? I reckon if they tried they'd be stopped. Or Crowdy marsh nother—that's every bit and crumb as bad. And the rocks and stones o' Brownwilly and Roughtor. Be there not scores on scores o' hiding places there?'

'That's well enough, but you can't live on air.'

'Who'd tell tales o' me? Never you fear. Folks wouldn't let me starve when they knowed I were in hiding. I tell y' nigh to Roughtor is a fogou (cave)——'

'Nay, not a word, I don't want to hear nothing, about hiding places. I wish you'd go and tell your tale about shooting thickey chap to someone else. I tell y' clean out—I won't know naught more about it, and here's good-bye according.'

He jumped on Physic's horse that he had been leading, and galloped down the lane and out upon the road, where he dismounted and turned the cob adrift.

'I will go to Turnipike's missus for all that,' said Esther, and walked on. She had hardly reached the road before she met the rector, combing his whiskers, and blandly smiling at first one hedge and then the other, as though they were dissenters to be conciliated.

'Pars'n!' said Esther, striding up to him, 'can y' write now?'

'Write, my child, of course I can. Don't I write two sermons every week and three in Lent?'

'Will y' now come in wi' me to Betsy Pike's, and write out what I want to say?'

'Certainly, with the utmost alacrity. And what is it about?'

'About that ou'd Physic.'

'Physic! What about him?'

'About the shutting of him.'

'Shutting—shutting, where has he been shut up?'

'He's a shut through the heart, and dead as a want (mole).'

'Gracious me!'

The rector stood still, and his jaw dropped.

'I'd like y' pars'n to take down all I've gotten to say about it.'

And there—there's the pistern as did it. Smell to it, her's got the smitch (smell) o' powder about her still.'

'Merciful goodness!' Mr. Pamphlet remained motionless, gasping.

'And I want y' to put it all down on paper how it were a done.'

'Shot—Mr. Physic shot! You wicked girl, you are making a joke—a miserable practical joke!'

'It's all right,' said Esther. 'Come wi' me if you doubt, and I'll show you where he lies at Tolmenna. What made he go for to drive gran'fer and us—me and my ou'd grammer out o' the house for, if he didn't expect a breakfast off lead? My grammer ill wished him, and it's come to pass. Her said it would. Will y' now please come and put it all down in writing? And please tak' the pistern and give her to the perlice.'

'I!—I!—I!'

Mr. Pamphlet flushed the colour of a mulberry. 'I'll have nothing whatever to do with this. I mixed up in a police case like this! I have to appear in a court as witness, and be cross-questioned; it might interfere with my prospects, I mean my ministerial efficacy. I'll have nothing to do with it. Don't touch me! Don't let me see that horrible pistol, go away! Go away! Gracious! go away! Don't come near me—don't stop me!' and the Revd. Mr. Rector walked, almost ran, to escape the girl.

Esther stood irresolute for a few moments, looking after him, when she heard a sharp peremptory voice demand, 'What is the matter?'

She turned and saw Jane Curgenven leading Physic's cob. That good lady had been paying a parochial visit to the Turnpikes, to administer advice, reprimand, and a tract, and her father had promised to walk along the road and meet her as she returned. On leaving the cottage of the Pikes, Jane had found the agent's cob cropping the grass by the roadside, and had arrested it by the bridle, and was leading the animal. She concluded that the agent had hitched his beast up outside a farm or cottage whilst he entered on business, and that it had broken away. She would lead the cob to Curgenven, and then Physic could have it from the stables when he came for it.

'What is the matter?' asked Jane, surprised to see her father careering along the road at so exceptional a rate, so inconsistent with his rectorial dignity.

'Pars'n is right curious,' said Esther. 'I told 'n somethin', and I axed 'n something, and it made 'n run like a mazed hare.'

‘What was it?’

‘It were naught but I told ’n as Lawyer Physic were dead. He be shut through the heart, and I axed ’n to take the pistern and write down what I had to say.’

‘Physic dead?’

‘Ees. Folks mostly be when they’s shut. That’s the reason why his cob be a runnin’ loose.’

‘Come with me this instant,’ said Jane Curgenven. ‘Come with me this instant, you abominable girl. Come with me to Mrs. Pike’s house. I’ll have this cleared up at once, and I’ll lock you up there in the coalhole, till I can send for the police to have you taken to prison.’

‘No—not that,’ said Esther, with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders and toss of her glowing head of hair. ‘I’ll not be took and pined i’ a gaol, not I. But there—take the pistern. Thickey’s the chap as did it. Her as shut’n ain’t such a terrible distance off. If you like to say ’twere I, you’re welcome. None else were near. That’s why I come here, and axed pars’n to take it all down. Now you know about it. There’s the pistern, and you can tell the perlice, but take me they shan’t.’

She put the pistol into Jane Curgenven’s hand, turned, ran up the lane towards the moor, and was lost.

Jane Curgenven with promptitude faced about, and still leading Physic’s cob went back to the cottage she had left recently. There she halted at the door, and called out the two eldest children, Tom and Jesse.

‘Tom,’ said she, ‘jump into the saddle, and ride as hard as you can gallop for the police, and here’s sixpence for your pains.’ Then to herself, ‘I must see that Esther be caught and brought to the gallows.’

‘Jesse,’ said she, ‘go as fast as you can toddle for the doctor, and here is twopence for your trouble.’ Then to herself, ‘I must see what can be done for Physic, before it be too late.’

CHAPTER XLV.

CHEATED.

NEVER within the memory of man was such commotion caused in Curgenven as by the tidings that rapidly spread relative to the murder of Physic, the agent—no, not even by the suicide of Cap-

tain Lambert. The latter was a death leading to no very serious consequences, or no more serious consequences than a shift in the squireship. The present death entailed as a corollary a capital trial, and 'someone to swing for it,' as it was expressed. Who that someone was hardly anybody doubted; and it added to the zest of the excitement that this somebody was a female, and one whom all had regarded with suspicion, if not with disgust. The schoolmaster had something to say about it, and to show how it all came of Esther not having reached the second standard. The Scripture reader had something to say about it, and to put it down to her having boiled her kettle with his 'Are you converted?'—a tract he had specially commended to her. The mission woman had something to say about it. She attributed the crime to Esther's not having been confirmed.

The women of Curgenven village ran in and out of each other's houses, talking over what had taken place. No woman was to be found in her own dwelling; everyone had entertained mistrust of Esther; everyone had expected that the turning of the Moridegs out of Tolmenna would bring bad luck on the head of Lawyer Physic.

The men congregated after work hours in the public-house or coffee tavern and concurred in their view that it served Physic right; that they did not pity him, yet that nevertheless they could not cordially approve of the method adopted for ridding the estate and neighbourhood of him.

The children in the school could neither do an addition sum rightly nor spell a sentence correctly, the day following the death of Physic. The farmers could get no work done on their farms. The labourers were engaged in discussing the event, not on driving their ploughs.

All day long a train of pilgrims visited the scene of the murder; and all who visited the spot brought away with them some memento of the crime—a blade of grass on which the dead man had lain, a bit of moss stained with blood, a smoked wad from the pistol, a chip off the block of stone against which his head had rested. In mediæval times people greedily collected relics of martyrs, nowadays they gather relics of murderers or the murdered with equal greed. The gardeners of Curgenven Hall congregated in the potting-shed and let the fire go out in the furnace that warmed the conservatories. The coachman and grooms sat over the fire in the saddle-room, smoking, and sent into the house for cider, over which to argue relative to the chances of Esther being

caught. In the dairy the milk was burnt when the cream was being scalded, and the pigs in the sty went that day without their bucket of wash ; but the fowls had a double feed of Indian corn, hastily thrown them by the maid without stopping to measure the proper allowance. In the kitchen the soup was allowed to boil over and perfume the whole house with its savour on the red-hot stove plate, and the butler sent out a silver egg-spoon and a dessert fork for the kitchen-maid to empty down the sink. No one in all Curgenven could think of anything but the murder, and everyone expressed an opinion thereon save two people—the rector, who reserved his, and Theresa, who was not, at her husband's insistence, told of it.

It was known that the police constable had been summoned by Mrs. Curgenven the elder, that she had stated to him that Esther Morideg had confessed to her the murder of Mr. Physic, and had given her the pistol with which the murder was committed. It was further known that the constable had viewed the body, along with the surgeon, and found life extinct, and that he had gone off at once to endeavour to arrest Esther in the temporary habitation occupied by her grandparents ; that he had failed to find her there, or to obtain any information as to her whereabouts from the old people ; that accordingly he had returned to Curgenven, where he had demanded a warrant from Mr. Percival Curgenven, who was a magistrate ; and that, armed with this warrant, he had departed for Liskeard to consult the head of the police.

The footman from the hall was suddenly elevated to being the hero of the day, for he could tell how he had seen Esther Morideg fire out of the window of the Bungalow, and how she had asked him to stand that she might have a shot at him, and how she had then and there declared her intention to take the life of Mr. Physic, to which threat he, John Thomas, had not paid much attention at the time, thinking it mere bravado ; and he had overheard expressions of anger made use of by the girl at having been dispossessed of the house at Tolmenna, but which now he was ready to swear to before the judges, and stand to. The butler, not to be behind, declared that he was the last person who had seen Mr. Physic alive, as he had called at the house to inquire after 'Missus.' That cannot have been more than half an hour before he was shot.

Then Pike, the horsebreaker, finding that John Thomas was the lion of the day, put in his claim to be a lion also in a degree

still higher. He had seen Esther Morideg immediately after the murder walking with the pistol in her hand, and smelling of gunpowder down to her toes. And Esther had told him that Lawyer Physic were shot. 'But,' said Pike, with a qualm of pity for the girl, 'he would swear before the most intelligent jury, and the oldest and venerablest judge in England, that she said it was pure accident; that is to say, Lawyer Physic had been impertinent to her, and in self-defence she'd done it.'

'Ah!' said some of the women, 'he was a cruel impident piece o' goods.'

'Ise sure,' said a very ugly old spinster, 'he made eyes at me oft enough as though he'd eat me; and what he'd 'a said had I give he the chance the Lord knows.'

But the view that Physic had been killed by accident or by Esther in self-defence did not find general favour. It was not to be denied that the Moridegs had been given the utmost provocation; that the old man had threatened 'to do' for the agent; that he had already been in prison for having attacked him; and it was argued that as the girl had gloried in her grandfather's act, she had endeavoured to outdo it. Then the story rapidly evolved myth about it. Someone had said that Physic had been killed, not by a bullet from a pistol, but by a slug from the old moorman's gun. This, having been partly overheard, was seized on by the person who half-heard it, and who, being desirous of heightening the tragedy, declared he had heard that when found Physic was half eaten by slugs, that had worked their way into his heart and liver. Whereupon the blacksmith, who set up to be an original thinker and an agnostic, said the whole story was false, no murder had been committed, but the agent had died of a sluggish liver. Some youths who were wont to hang about the forge, or who affected to be free-thinkers, though actually incapable of thinking either freely or in bands, adopted the blacksmith's view, and said that they did not believe in the pistol, and that Esther was an uncommonly handsome girl, and there was no harm in her. It was naught but jealousy and spite accusing her of a crime that had not been committed. Thereupon all the elderly, ugly, and married women, and all the pretty young and unmarried women as well, ran together as drops of mercury and coalesced in one body of opinion, that certainly Esther was guilty, that she was vicious by nature, of a malignant humour, capable of any crime, and entirely devoid of good looks as she was of Christianity. Finally, the whole popula-

tion of Curgenven was broken up into factions, one holding that Esther had shot the agent, another that he had been shot by the grandfather, a third that he had not been shot at all, but had died suddenly of a sluggish liver, or something like it, somehow connected with slugs.

Theresa had returned home in a condition of mental numbness, dominated by terror, not for herself. She did not consider the danger to which she was exposed, she was conscious only of the fact that she had taken a life—that a man who lived, and thought, and schemed, and in his fashion enjoyed himself, had by her act been thrust out of this world through the veil into the unseen.

She had never intended this, never thought of violently sweeping the man who tormented her from her path. She had hoped to frighten him; the rector had suggested that she should do this. She did not know that the pistol was loaded. It had not occurred to her to essay whether it were or not. She had not loaded it herself, and she was too bewildered to be able to consider how it was that it came to be charged with powder and shot, and provided with a cap.

She could see before her everywhere those upturned boot-soles with their patches, one patched across the front, the other half-heeled. Physic trod down his right boot on the inside, and was continually obliged to have pieces put on to rectify the abrasions. In this new portion the nails were bright and of brass, the nails did not show in the older portion of the sole. If Theresa looked at a picture, the soles stood between her and it, and behind the soles was a black shapeless shadow. If she looked at her bed, the soles were there, thrust out from under the valance; out of the window—they were between her and the landscape. Moreover, the scent of the powder followed her. The flowers on her table, the geraniums on the stairs, all exhaled a savour of exploded gunpowder.

Her maid came up with the tray, and beef-tea and toast. The beef-tea steamed like powder, the toast tasted of it. Theresa turned her head aside, she could not endure the food.

Hours passed, the night closed in. She sat looking into the fire, and seeing soles in the coals thrust out between the bars, then disappearing, and fresh boot-soles appearing. She became restless, feverish with impatience when none were distinguishable, waiting, expecting till they reappeared somewhere among the coals or among the flames.

Then Mr. Curgenven arrived. He had been summoned from the shooting party to sign a warrant to enable the police to arrest Esther Morideg, suspected of having caused the death of Mr. Physic. He had listened to the story, had done what was required of him, and then gave orders to the servants to maintain silence on the matter before their mistress, whose health would not suffer her to be agitated.

He came upstairs to see her, to kiss her, take her hand, and feel whether it were cold or feverish, and inquire how she was. He was shocked and alarmed at her appearance, the stony look of her face, the sunken eyes, the bloodless lips. Never before had she failed to respond to his tenderness, to smile when he came in, and address him with pleasant words of welcome. But now she seemed hardly to see him, the muscles of her face were set as though they would never relax, and her tongue was tied that she could not speak.

He was concerned. Instead of being better than when he left her, she was markedly worse. He determined to send for the doctor, and urged her at once to go to bed.

She listlessly assented, and when he had left and sent up her maid, allowed herself to be undressed. But on the servant beginning to remove Theresa's gown, there fell from her breast the long envelope that contained the will. She had forgotten it till that moment. The maid, by stooping to pick it up, attracted her attention; animation was restored, and snatching the envelope from the girl's hands, she said, 'Leave me! Leave me for ten minutes. I do not want you,' and stood trembling and watching till the maid had closed the door behind her.

The fixity in which her faculties had been sealed was gone, exchanged for a flutter of conflicting emotions. She thought now of the will, no more of that ghastly spectacle of upturned boot-soles on the moor. She had the will—she had that very document for which she had risked so much; and now, with the fire burning in the grate, it was in her power to destroy it, and put an end for ever to the anxiety and threat of trouble this hateful document carried with it.

She hastily tore open the envelope, walked to the dressing-table, where two candles were burning beside the looking-glass, and spread the will out upon the mirror, that she might satisfy her eyes that she really did have in her power the coveted document. She read it through in feverish haste. As she read she

recalled every word. It was the same that she had seen at Physic's office, and yet——

She dropped one hand that was holding the paper, and in so doing struck over one of the candles, that fell, and was broken and extinguished on the carpet. She did not notice this, she caught the paper up and held it to the other candle, and looked at the signatures. The paper was not the same.

No, it was not the same. She had been cheated. Physic had passed off on her a copy. On the original was a seal. Lambert had not only signed his name, but after signing it he had sealed it, out of some fancy that to seal as well as to sign was necessary to give force to such a deed. He had sealed it with his signet that bore the Curgenven crest. On this there was no seal, nothing but the signatures copied. It was a transcript. A scalding rush of blood poured through the veins of Theresa. After all, Physic had meant to deceive her, to sell her a worthless copy, and retain in his hands the original wherewith still to threaten her.

Every particle of remorse or regret for having caused his death, every atom of pity for the man died out of her soul, never again to revive. He had brought her that copy with protests of straight dealing, and he had met with his desert.

But a second thought now swelled up in her mind, taking from her breath, and sight, and hearing.

Where was the jewel case?

She had put it into Physic's hands, and then had endeavoured by a threat to recover it from him. The pistol had been discharged, he had fallen; and in that moment of supreme horror, she had forgotten wholly the existence of the case, and that it had been left in his hands.

A sickening terror oppressed her. That case would be found with the dead man, and through it the truth must come out.

How could the truth be concealed? That jewel case would be recognised, and it would be known that she, and she only, had been in possession of it. The conclusion certain to be reached was that she had had something to do with Physic either immediately before or at the very moment of his death. How else could his having the Curgenven jewel case and the presence of the Curgenven pistol be accounted for? Suspicion must inevitably fall on her——and then!——and then!

The copy of the will was worthless. She threw it into the fire, and when it was consumed, cast herself on the bed and

covered her eyes with her hands : not to sleep for one quarter of an hour all that long night ; not to toss from side to side, but to lie in one position, with her hands over her burning eyes thinking, but never reaching any solution that could give her rest.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IN THE SMOKE.

ROGER MORIDEG and his wife were seated in the shed converted temporarily into a habitation ; a fire was burning in the middle, a fire of skin-turf, and the smoke found its way out as best it might through the thatch, so that from without the hovel had the appearance of a steaming dunghill. To ordinary eyes and lungs the atmosphere within would have been unendurable, but it did not affect either sensibly. Old Roger was adding to the fume by smoking his broken black pipe, and his wife Tamsin was swinging herself whilst knitting, and singing a ballad :

There was a woman, and a widow was she,
The red, the green, and the yellow !
A daughter she had as the elm tree,¹
Oh ! the flowers that bloom in the valley !

Then the old man withdrew his pipe from his mouth and joined in the chorus, taking a third below the melody :

The harp, the lute, the fife, the flute and the cymbal.
Sweet goes the treble violin,
Oh ! the flowers that bloom in the valley !

The knitter continued :

There came a knight all clothed in red,
The red, the green, and the yellow !
Oh ! and will you be——

When the door was thrown open and Esther came in.

'Now,' said she, 'give kimby.² I've news.'

'What be it? No kimby till I knows what the news be.'

'Physic is dead—lyin' dead to Tolmenna, and volks do say as I've a shut'n !'

'How can that be?' asked Roger, turning to where his gun usually hung, but, owing to the smoke, being unable to see it, he put forth his hand and felt it. 'Aye! here her be. I reckon you can't shut wi'out the instrument to do't wi'.'

¹ The Cornish elm, that grows as a poplar or a pine, small-leaved.

² A handful for good news,

'Tis true,' said Esther, 'Physic be lyin' dead, however it be he's 'a gotten his death. But this I know, folks 'll put it on me.'

'That's like enough,' said Roger. 'There's reason there.'

'And I must be off and hide, or I'll be ta'en and put i' the clink where you was, gran'fer, and not get out so soon and so peart as you.'

'Folks'll put it on us, for sartain sure,' said Tamsin, 'as you, Roger, bear'n a malice, and I 'a ill-wished'n. Us 'a said us wished the lawyer-chap dead, and they'll say us killed'n. It's as true that as fingers be fingers and not toes.'

'It's me, gran'fer, as they'll be after, and I must just run for't. I know very well where I'll go, but I shall want a thing or two, so as——'

'And where's that?'

'I wi'n't tell,' answered Esther. 'Then you can say you dun' know. It's waste o' good words telling lies, and there's no pleasure in it where there's no cause.'

'But how did Lawyer Physic come to die?' asked Roger.

'I'll tell y' what he looks like now, gran'fer,' said Esther. 'But if you ask me how he come to look like this, why, I wi'n't say, not but that I could if I would.'

After she had given a vigorous and graphic account of the condition of the corpse, Roger shook his head.

'You didn't do it wi' a moorstone, that's sartain, nor wi' my gun, for there she be. But lor-a-mussy, what matters how he cam' by his dose o' lead so long as he got it, and no one can't say but sarves him right.'

'And they be after me. They've made up their minds I 'a done it, and I wi'n't be caught and locked up i' Bodmin gaol not if I knaws it; I'll run first. So now give me what I want.'

'And what doest a want?'

'I want a reapin'-hook, and a blanket, and loaf o' bread—that's all.'

'I don't see why you need go,' said Tamsin. 'T'es gran'fer and I hev been most for'ard wi' our words agin' Lawyer Physic, and not you, Esther.'

'Why, if I run, they'll say for sure it be I and not you, and leave you old volks quiet.'

'There's something in that.'

'And second,' said Esther, 'if I didn't do it mysel', why I seed it done, and by a very good friend as I doan't want to hev to send to the gallows, and it's just this, no lies'd do in this case, else I'd

tell them by the scores, and look as simple as any noggy. But they wi'n't do, more's the pity. There's nothin' for't but I must run.'

'There's no hurry,' said the old woman. 'There's no reason to be i' such a tarve. Set you down. You mun eat fust, afore you can run the country, and I've got the taties on the boil now.'

'I don't wish to be ketched here,' said Esther.

'There's no need you should,' answered her grandmother. 'Punch'll mind the door, and bark if anyone comes nigh. Then in the dimmits (twilight) you can go.'

Esther allowed herself to be persuaded. Tamsin proceeded to turn the potatoes into a large earthen bowl; with them were lumps of bacon.

'There, now,' she said, 'don't scald your fingers; help yourselves as you likes.'

'I wonner now,' observed the old man, 'who'll get the Tolmenna property. Lawyer Physic warn't married and had no childer, and I never heard as he had kin.'

'Then us may go back agin to the ou'd place,' said Tamsin. 'That'll be brave. But 't'll be cruel hard work buildin' of her up again.'

'I'd like to know who'd done it,' said the old fellow, shaking his head. 'T'es curious. But I didn't reckon there was any other but myself had the face to do it. And I didn't do it for sure sertain, as I wor sittin' here and singin'. And Esther couldn't a done it, best wishes ain't firearms. If it 'ud been a knack wi' a stone, her was ekal to that, but to shut'n,' he shook his head again, 'her ain't up to them may games.'

Roger leisurely peeled a potato, set it on his knee, and before eating said, 'Why, now, shu'dn't us make it out a case o' phillideecee; then there's no trouble to nobody. Ou'd mother there and I can 'a heerd'n say he was goin' to do it, and were zick o' life, and cruel uneasy in conscience; and you, Esther, can 'a seed'n shut hisself, and there we be—no bother to nobody, and satisfactory to everyone consarned. Ees, I reckon that'll do it. Wheer now, Esther, did he get the gun? Was he out after woodcock? N that won't come fitty. You sez 'twere done wi' a bullet. Never m id. Gi'e me five minutes, and I'll shape it out—killed hisself, n right in his head, had terrible headaches, and conscience worser.'

'Hist!' said Tamsin.

The dog was barking outside furiously.

'Quick!' said the old woman, as she flung wet heather on the

fire, 'you throw yourself down in the farran (fern), and I'll cover you up.'

No sooner said than done; Esther had crept behind her grandmother, who at once piled fern, and sticks, and skin-turf¹ over her.

The fire poured forth volumes of pungent white smoke that filled the hovel and rolled forth at the door; so dense was it, that the policeman coming up outside, when he looked in could see nothing; his eyes ran with water, and he coughed as the smoke entered his lungs.

Mrs. Morideg was rocking herself and knitting, droning her song,

There came a knight all clothed in red,
The red, the green, and the yellow!
'And will you be my bride?' he said,
Oh! the flowers that bloom in the valley!

And Roger threw in his part lustily,

The harp, the lute, the fife, the flute and the cymbal.
Sweet goes the treble violin,
Oh! the flowers that bloom in the valley!

The old woman continued:

There came a second all clothed in green,
The red, the green, and the yellow!
And he said, 'My fair, will you be my queen?'
Oh! the flowers——

'Come out! come out, you bedlam hag!' shouted the policeman. 'I'm no more a knight all clothed in green than you are a fair maid.'

'Lor-a-mussy!' exclaimed Roger. 'To think now, it's our good friend Mr. Tregaskis. And it's main glad I be to see you. Step in and hev a potato. There be one ready peeled a-coolin' on my knee, and I've a brave bit o' vat bacon atween my fingers. Come now, don't y' be feared that my old 'ooman 'll cast her eye over ye, there be such a pother o' smoke I doubt if that you can see her. Come in, and be hearty welcome now. And if you'll stop, I'll see if I can't find a drop o' sperit to comfort y'.'

'I cannot stay—what a confounded smoke! Where is your daughter Esther?'

'O Lor'!' said Mrs. Morideg, 'doan't y' go a rippin' up ou'd

¹ Of turf on the Cornish moors there are two kinds, the peat turf, dug in the bogs, and the skin turf, a spade-graft off the surface of the moor anywhere taken where not stony.

wounds, Mister Tregaskis. Her's in heavenly glory—eighteen year last Curgenven feast.'

Then she broke out into a song sung through the long length and the narrow breadth of Cornwall, and more familiar than 'God save the Queen:'

Don't you zee my Billy comin' ?
 Don't you zee him in a cloud ?
 Gardin' angels zingin' round'n,
 Wrapped in a gou'den shroud.

Then Roger roared out the chorus in bass to the shrill pipe of Tamsin's treble:

Billy is the lad I do adore,
 Billy is my darlin'.
 Billy is a-dyin'.
 Oh ! I fear I shall niver zee'n more !

'Always meanin',' threw in Mrs. Morideg, 'my poor daughter Esther as a-died, and be now i' glory ! Praises, oh ! it's groanin' matter, sure. Roger, groan there now, can't y'?' And both old folks began to groan as at a Revival meeting, and rock themselves as they did so.

'Oh, darn that tatie!' exclaimed Roger. 'Her's trummled off my knee.'

'I do not mean your daughter; I mean that girl, your grand-child,' said the sergeant, angrily.

'Ah! now why didn't y' say so, mister? Come in like a friend and sit down, thickey pertatie be gettin' deadly cold, saving where my knees 'a put a little warmth into her. Dear, dear life! now I be main sorry the pertatie be so dirty. Her tum'led on the ground, and my ou'd wife—dirty ou'd toad—han't swept'n up fitty this mornin'.'

'Where is the girl? I cannot come in, I should be stifled. Can't you throw some of the stuff off the fire?'

'Why, Lor', Mister Tregaskis, us'd set the whole place a-fire if us scattered the trade (stuff) about; and it ud make such a gashly smoke, ye could eat'n like figgy puddin'.'

'Is Esther Morideg within?'

'Esther! Lor', Mister Tregaskis, whatever be you a-thinkin' of? Her's been gone five or six hours. Her went to Dozmare Pool a flint pickin'.'

'Flint picking?'

'Aye, so I reckon. Them larned folks to Truro be wun'erful

curious about the flints us picks up—and there's a sight on 'em to be gotten to Dozmare, and her picks up a bit o' money that way, and it's as good a way as yourn nor mine, I spose.'

'That's false. She has not been to Dozmare. She has been to Tolmenna.'

'Has she though? I'll smack her when her comes home for telling of lies. Her said her was going, but us bain't birds o' the air to fly overhead and see whereabouts her goes. There's one thing I be sure of, her's not runnin' the country after young men, as some maids does I could name.'

'I know nothing about that,' retorted the policeman. 'What I want to know is—that Esther is not here.'

'I've told y' so.'

'Yes, but that does not satisfy me.'

'Well, then, come in and look round for yourself.'

'I can't bear the smoke.'

'There, now, and I couldn't abear to be laced up in them tight clothes as you be; it all comes o' edication. I think nothin' o' the smoke; nor will you if you come in, and sit here and eat the pertaties. In ten minutes you'll be right enough.'

The policeman stepped within, coughing and blinking.

'I'll try to get up a flame,' said Tamsin, throwing on a fursæ-bush that did indeed blaze up and fill the hovel with light; in the dense smoke, however, little could be distinguished.

'The pertatie is waitin' for y', said Roger. 'Look at'n settin' on my knee and axin' to be eaten.'

'I want none of your potatoes,' replied the policeman, irritated by the smoke. 'I will satisfy myself the girl is not within.'

'Shall I make more blaze, Mister Tregaskis?' asked Tamsin.

'I don't think it helps much. Where is your gun?'

'Here,' answered Roger with alacrity. 'I haven't used 'n for half an age. Smell to his mouth; it be sweet as the breath o' a baby.'

He handed the old gun through the smoke to the policeman, who took it outside, and applied his nose to the barrel, and looked at the lock with watery eyes, then passed it back again. Mrs. Morideg began to knit, rock herself, and sing:

The moon doth shine so bright in the sky,

The red, the green, and the yellow!

'Come out, come out!' did the green knight cry,

Oh! the flowers that bloom in the valley!

And she and old Roger, at the top of their voices, with something of triumph and mockery in the tone, roared the chorus,

The harp, the lute, the fife, the flute, and the cymbal.
Sweet goes the treble violin——

‘Be silent, will you!’ shouted the policeman, nettled at his want of success, altogether beaten by the fumes of the fire. ‘I’ll tell you what, you howling savage, I’ll tear a hole in the roof, and let this darned smoke out, and then I’ll be able to ransack the whole piggery!’

‘Oh, my dear!’ exclaimed Mrs. Morideg, ‘that’ll never do. What will Farmer Worthy say to that up to Trewortha? This bain’t no house o’ our’n; her’s but lent us. He’ll hev the law on you, sure as you’rn a real perliceman, that he will.’

‘Then I’ll come in and grope into every corner. I believe Esther is here.’

‘And what be you a-come after my Esther for?’ asked Tamsin. ‘Is it honourable, and you be courtin’ of her? Why, I always heard say as you was a respectable chap. So if you means it honourable, come along.’

‘It’s nothing of the sort,’ said the policeman. ‘Come, turn out of this house, and let me in; I’ll soon have done with the fire and smoke, and let some daylight into the place.’

‘Not so, mister!’ replied Roger; ‘I’m not to be turned out o’ this house as I was from t’other. Show me your warrant first, I say.’

With this the policeman was not then provided. He had come on at once in quest of Esther, denounced as the murderess by Mrs. Curgenven. He knew enough of the extent of his power, and that he might get into trouble if he went beyond it.

He stood outside for a moment or two, racking his brain to discover what was best to be done, whilst the dog Punch snarled and barked round him, and made a rush at his calves whenever he attempted to enter the hovel. Then ensued a fresh glare within accompanied by a denser outpour of smoke. The old woman had heaped fresh fuel on the fire.

It was not possible for civilised lungs and eyes to endure the fume, and he turned to leave, in ill-humour with himself, and especially with the Moridegs. But he had not taken half a dozen steps from the door before he was rapped on the shoulders by the gun-barrel, and turning sharply, saw Esther, who had sprung through the door and held her grandfather’s fowling-piece.

'Ah! I knew you were there.. Now I'll arrest you. I arrest you in the Queen's name on a charge of murder.'

'No—you do not touch me,' said Esther. 'Come a courtin' o' me, is it? Why, Tregaskis, you're the first man as has. And I tell y' what, you mun ketch me afore you can call me your'n. Give me the start, and let us run.'

'In the Queen's name, I arrest you,' said the policeman, stepping towards her.

'Nay! you'll not catch me that road,' said Esther, with a laugh. 'Us'll have rare games, us will. Tip and run. See, Tregaskis!' She brought the muzzle of the barrel down on his shoulder, and then flung the fowling-piece away. 'There, I'm off; tip and run. Ketch me if you can!'

And like a fawn she leaped a bank and went as a fawn bounding over the moor. Tregaskis shook his head. He could not follow, or were he to follow, it would not be with the smallest prospect of catching the girl.

(To be continued.)

FROM CHRISTCHURCH BAY.

GREAT have been the changes in that once quaint region in the North Kent Marshes, opposite the Isle of Sheppey, of which so much has lately been written, a district formerly full of interest and attraction for the wild fowler and the naturalist. Where the famous old coaching house at 'Standbeck'—or rather Sittingbourne—stood, with its gateway guarded on either side by live golden eagles chained to their stands, there is now, I believe, a flourishing drapery store, and instead of the solid and stately Dutch mansions and warehouses of the merchants of a bygone day lining the water sides, cement works, new wharves, and ship-yards have been erected; whilst the silence of other spots, which was once only broken by the cry of the wild fowl and the sound of the rushing tide, has given place to the busy hum of machinery and the noisy clang of hammers.

So far as health goes, the change must be greatly for the better, if one may judge from an old rhyme which runs something to this effect :—

'He who wishes to live very long,
Should live neither at Sittingbourne, Milton, Teynham, or Tonge;
If for a little while,
Let him live at Babchild.'

There are, however, some other picturesque and most restful spots still left in our country, having the same characteristics, if less extensive in their range, where the lover of birds may delight himself on moor and marsh, in marking their comings and their goings, listening to their song, and noting their many varied voices. From his skiff or canoe on some quiet backwater he can observe the waders daintily tripping and feeding about the sandy shores of miniature bays and the margins of shallow pools. Less changed than most localities is that district which lies between the borders of the New Forest and Christchurch Bay, the greater landowners of that region having set their faces against accommodation-being provided for those health-seekers from our cities who crowd to the lodging-houses of other adjacent towns and villages. Amusing stories are told locally of the conservatism of some of these estate holders; for instance, one is said not to allow

any evening service to be held in the church that happens to be on his property lest the singing of the congregation should disturb his game. Nor will he allow a dissenting chapel of any sort to be erected there, so it is said, for fear the proceedings, which would probably be altogether too lively and demonstrative, should have a hurtful effect on the slumbers of the feathered creatures in his preserves.

A limited number of visitors, however, will find, as I did, comfortable accommodation on the shores of the backwater.

From a fine old grey pile of buildings, including Christchurch and the Priory, there is a continuous fringe of yellow-plastered, red-tiled houses, and old thatched cottages, which continues for two miles round the Avon Mouth and along the backwater. This ends at Mudeford with the pleasant mansion called Gundimore, where Sir Walter Scott, as Mr. Stewart Rose's visitor, spent some months, engaged in writing 'Marmion,' and by way of distraction riding about in the New Forest and exploring barrows. Coleridge also lodged at Mudeford during the year 1816.

Not far from the last of the Mudeford houses, on the height overlooking the bay, that noted sportsman, the Hon. Grantley Berkeley, had his home; Beacon Lodge it is called. Hither, when unable to follow the pleasures of the chase, and therefore in sore need of distraction, he would summon a prize-fighter of that region, with whom the day was spent in the pastime called playing at fisticuffs. From all local accounts this sportsman was more kindly disposed to animals than to those nearer of kin to himself. Many a tale is told of him by the New Foresters, as well as of his bloodhound Druid, which has been known to run thirty miles in pursuit of a stag, holding it at last. To judge from many of the stories anent his daily life, he must have been what in the New Forest dialect would be termed a 'rammucky' character.

The shooting sheds, where that old father of wild-fowling, Colonel Peter Hawker, kept his punts, are still to be seen at Key Haven, off the mud flats at Lymington, whence they used to come up Christchurch Harbour. Beyond, the white cliffs of the Isle of Wight gleam in the sunlight, and the Needles stand. The derivation of the name of these isolated upright rocks, by the way, is from its old name of Nieder, or Lower Shore. At the Haven Mouth is an ancient and picturesque group of buildings which, judging from their construction, may possibly be of Dutch origin, hailing from the same period as the fine old mansion in the main

street, where Mr. Evans now has his school. This still goes by its old name of Amsterdam House.

Whilst I was at Mudeford, a colony of fishermen, who had for many generations occupied the Haven Mouth buildings, without, I believe, paying any rent for them, were ousted from what had become a somewhat disreputable rookery. The inmates, of both sexes and all ages, slept together side by side in the large old rooms, and led, most of them, a somewhat irregular life, until they got notice to quit, this last summer of 1892. They were sorely tried to find quarters convenient for their avocation, and the wives were wandering hither and thither in most disconsolate fashion. The salmon fishery being then in full swing, the men were all fully occupied in what is their harvest time. Christchurch salmon always holds its own in our market.

What could be more delightful than the walk across the marshes from Stanpit to the Priory, especially on a bright spring morning, when the celandine, larger and brighter than any I have seen elsewhere, gleams under the hedges of the gardens that run down to the marsh, and the cattle, feeding on grassy knolls here and there, in the clear light peculiar to this region at certain times, seem to be of the same breed and condition as those remarkably clean and sleek-coated animals that Sydney Cooper paints. Towards evening, when the sun's rays slant across the marshes and meadows, the cows in Cuypp's pictures will be suggested to one's mind. Then there are the great masses of king-cup, and later on star-like water lilies, yellow iris, and tall flowering reeds with their waving purplish-red plumes.

From the water, with a wide reed-bed in the immediate foreground, out of which young herons rise in startled flight at the approach of our punt, the ancient grey pile of Christchurch is a beautiful object. In front of it is the Priory, an old red building, most picturesque when tenderly touched by the young green of early spring. Behind us is Hengistbury Head, where the Danes first landed, wearing the same appearance now that it did of old. There the birds nest and sing, and rare insects disport themselves, unmolested as they have ever been. On its shore, towards the end of April and early in May, I have watched the newly arrived migrants actively flitting to and fro among the brilliantly flowering gorse and the budding honeysuckle and trailing brambles. Some of the blithe little creatures were already breeding there; the nest of the grey-brown linnet we found snugly placed in the

centre of a great furze-bush, with its dainty little bluish-white speckled eggs, also that of the brightly marked wheatear; but this was cunningly built so far down in an old rabbit-hole that we could not get at the eggs to note their exquisite colouring. Of the wheatear's timidity and gentleness, 'a Son of the Marshes' says, 'The shadow of a crow's wing thrown on the turf as it passes overhead is enough to make him crouch and run for shelter.' The chiffchaff, or least willow-wren, was fluttering about, butterfly-like, hither and thither; his relative, the wood-wren, was there too, but not so much to the fore. He would move on very soon to the forest in which he delights; there, on some wooded slope, he builds his dome-shaped nest of dried grass and moss. From the shape of this and the materials used come the local names, such as oven-birds, or hay-birds, which have been given to the birds of this family.

The redstart flew from tree to tree. One of the prettiest sights I remember is watching a redstart in an orchard on a hillside under the full light of the sun, the trees covered with blossom. When he flashed from one bough to another, the peculiar jerking motion of his tail and its colouring fully justified the bird's rural name of firetail; and indeed the word *start* comes from *steort*, the Anglo-Saxon for tail. The stonechat and the whinchat were both at home among the gorse and short dry grass, uneasily flitting from one low bush to another at the approach of dreaded visitors; and the whitethroats, both large and small, were diving in and out of the tangled bushes, the male chiding and scolding at the intruding footsteps that dared to come into this paradise, which he evidently considered belonged especially to him and his.

As to the family of waders, it is always well represented about Christchurch Bay. Now and again a whimbrel, or May-bird, flew overhead, or we surprised him fishing with his long curved bill for small crustaceans beside a little marsh pool. Later on, during May, June, and July, the whimbrels are more numerous here.

On a shingly waste at the harbour mouth, amongst loose stones and brent, the ringed plover or dotterel was nesting. No fear of a casual observer finding the young of these birds, however. For one thing, their colour too closely resembles their surroundings, and if, by chance, you do approach somewhat near, the mother sounds her alarm note as she rises on the wing, and the wise little creatures, unless they are able to hide so closely amongst the largest stones that even a practised eye would fail to see them,

will quickly bury themselves with a few scrapings of their tiny feet in the loose sand of the shore; all depends just where they happen to be busily feeding when the parent's alarm is given.

Numbers of dunlins, oxbirds, or sea-snipe, run about, usually feeding in pairs at this season. The nests are very slightly formed among the sea-pinks, or on tussocks of long grass. Pretty little creatures, indeed, are they, tripping nimbly hither and thither, picking up their food of small shell-fish, marine insects, and worms. As the birds mount in flight they are constantly uttering their peculiar note of endearment.

Sanderlings are in little flocks of four to six about the end of April and early in May—the time when I am making these notes of the bird-frequenters of Christchurch Bay, Avon Mouth, and its backwaters. They are putting on their summer dress preparatory to leaving for the North, and what a never-ending source of marvel is the doffing and donning of the varying plumage of many of our birds! The nuptial dress of some of the males, assumed to charm the opposite sex, is wonderful, with its beautiful markings and vivid colouring. Their ways, generally, suggest a train of thought, of comparison between the habits of the two sexes of birds and of humans that is not altogether favourable to the latter. In the sands and the drifted heaps of seaweed the sanderlings' food is harboured. They are not shy of man, and towards dusk they become most anxious about each other, looking to see that none of their companions have wandered far. Continually uttering a cheeping cry, they pass within a few feet of us, very little alarmed at our presence. -

Of the curlews, the largest, and certainly the most wary, frequent these mud-flats as soon as the ebbing tide leaves them uncovered. In the adjoining heath district are their nests, where, early in May, eggs can be found. The curlew sandpiper only visits Christchurch occasionally—in May.

The grey plovers are here, and will be about until the third week in May. Then they take their departure, making the long journey to the Siberian tundras. Just now they are assuming their dark underparts. The grey plover is a larger bird than the golden plover, and its note is pitched in a sharper key.

As to the turnstone—called also in Norfolk the tangle-picker, from its habit of turning over seaweed as well as stones in quest of its living—it may be seen here in almost every month of the year, though Mr. Howard Saunders says that authenticated eggs

of this bird have not been found as yet in any part of the United Kingdom. Those about here are probably non-breeding birds—juveniles. They prefer the shingly beach, their method of searching for food differing from that of their near allies. The knot remains in these parts until the end of May, sometimes till early in June. Then he departs for his northern home in the Arctic regions, whither his progenitors have gone for nesting purposes from time immemorial. Strange it may seem that they should leave the sunny south for the bare and frigid north at that time. But in its brief season insect life abounds there, man disturbeth not, and in peace and quiet the birds can rest and bring out their young.

And, speaking of this immunity from the fear of man, one is reminded of the miserable fate that awaits many a beautiful little egret just when, in its fairest dress, it sits on the nest. One feather firm, we are told, has as many as fifty men employed in the nesting season to secure those feathers that milliners call aigrettes, which are so much worn in women's bonnets. Some will tell you that these are chiefly manufactured from goose-quills. That is true of the cheaper ones, but the aigrette in a lady's bonnet is the crowning beauty of an egret mother. The collector waits till she is on her nest, her little breast full of peace, and the young just hatched, so that the mother will not leave them easily, though alarmed. He ruthlessly seizes her, tears off her crowning plumes and her wings, and then throws her down, gasping, torn, and fluttering, to die beside her little ones, who, deprived of her fostering care, die also miserably. Lately, at a meeting of anti-vivisectionists, it was a curious instance of 'the evil wrought through want of thought' that many of the ladies protesting against the cruelty of vivisection wore these very egret plumes in their bonnets.

In April and early in May you will see here and there a solitary heron, but the older ones are nesting. I saw a number of young ones, in the harbour, fishing in their own solemn fashion. The bright eye of the heron, as its head is bent over the water, literally magnetises its prey. Nearer and nearer to this glittering point comes the fascinated creature; a sudden downward dart of the long bill, and all is over so far as that fish is concerned. The method is imitated by the lark-netter; he cunningly twirls a bit of glass, by means of a contrivance to which a long string is attached, and by which he operates at a little distance. It proves irresistibly attractive to the bird he is desirous of securing.

The spoonbill shows itself only very occasionally about Christchurch Bay, at the vernal migration; 'shoveler' was the old name given to this bird, owing to the shape of its bill, which the spoonbill has a habit of keeping in the water whilst feeding. It visits the harbour more frequently in the autumn. Mr. Hart, the well-known ornithologist, of Christchurch, who knows more about the birds of Hampshire probably than any other man, notes one having appeared there in May of 1891, a very interesting sight, as it walked about in stately fashion, with its snow-white plumage showing in glossy perfection against a dark background. The little bittern is only a casual visitor now, arriving, when it does come, about the end of March.

A few pairs of redshanks remain to breed on the south coast. A wary bird is this, carefully selecting the centre of a grass tuft, or cunningly concealing its nest under rough herbage. This is left long before you reach it, and the bird rises whistling in the air, with many a twist and turn. 'A Son of the Marshes' has dwelt on the cry of alarm which has gained for it the name of 'cussed yelper' from the shore shooters.

To turn to the family of falconidæ that visit Christchurch Bay, the peregrine falcon still nests around the southern coast on its higher cliffs, the eggs being laid in April. The name of peregrine is well applied, for this bird takes a very wide range in quest of prey, often going miles before he will begin to hunt, so as to avert suspicion from the nesting-place. The moors and marshes are visited for food. The hobby is a summer visitor only; the old nests of crows serve his purpose for breeding in. Of the falconidæ this is seen the latest on the wing.

During the autumn and winter the merlin is not at all uncommon. As to the kestrel, or windhover, he is common enough, nesting on Hengistbury Head and in many of the thick clumps of trees around; mice, voles, and beetles satisfy him fully as a rule.

In the month of May the osprey or mullet hawk is rare in this locality, but during the autumn he is seen most years. Higher and higher he passes over the harbour in graceful curves, until some fish attracts his attention. Then, with closed wings, he curls downwards, seizing his struggling prey, and bears it to some post to devour it, never relaxing his grip until his meal is ended. It is a curious fact that for many years the osprey has always sort of sorted to one particular post on which to eat its food. Lately there has been a danger of this bird disappearing from the harbour. Mr. Hart is always quickly informed when one is seen,

and he has been able, by taking up his position near that post, to prevent others who would not spare this fine bird, and in this way has preserved it more than once; for if he is supposed to be after a specimen, others think it useless to try to secure it.

The kite is now very rare; one in the same collector's museum was shot in Stanpit Marsh, between Mudeford and Christchurch. The last seen hereabouts was during October of 1884. The honey-buzzard, which was formerly a regular visitor to the New Forest for nesting, is now rare; so large a price has been given for the eggs as well as specimens of this bird, that he is seen no longer, although the common buzzard still breeds in many localities.

The whitetailed or sea eagle occasionally comes hither in the late autumn and winter. In the severe winter of 1890-91 a pair might have been seen any day at Avon Mouth. That same season from one hundred to two hundred wild geese, too, were often seen here in broad daylight. Three whitetailed eagles were shot for three successive years by a keeper at Herne Court, on the same day of the year, on the same bough of an old oak tree there. They bred formerly on the high cliffs, near the Needle Rocks, Isle of Wight. This bird's flight is almost noiseless, as he rises in a succession of curves, each curve taking him higher. After pausing a moment with folded wings, he swoops down, passing through the air like a meteor, to strike his talons into his quarry, which he will bear away and devour on some ridge of rocks.

The hen-harrier formerly bred in this district, but it is now almost a bird of the past. Montagu's harrier comes still to the New Forest district to nest, but he is only a spring and summer visitor. He nests always on the ground. A great pleasure it is to the lover of birds to watch its graceful flight, as it skims over the moors and heathland in search of its prey—mice, frogs, and small birds. The sparrowhawk is common enough—too common, in fact, to please the farmers and game preservers.

The artists and naturalists, entomologists and ornithologists, who have hitherto found the New Forest one of the finest hunting-grounds for their purposes in the kingdom, are earnestly hoping that in spite of Sir Redvers Buller's favourable report as to a possible site in its midst of a model range for rifle practice, that idea may not take further shape. Although, as he says, there is little traffic there, as a rule, to be interfered with, yet it would practically close to many students of the interesting and the beautiful a paradise such as is not accessible to them elsewhere.

ACTORS AND ACTRESSES IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

WITHIN the walls or beneath the shadow of Westminster Abbey are to be found the graves or monuments of most of the lights of the English stage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The splendid company of dramatists and authors, with whose names the Elizabethan era is connected, had all passed away; Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher lay in their several graves (two of these are in the Abbey), while the old theatres were deserted and empty. With the restoration of Charles II. the legitimate drama came again into favour, and the actors returned to the stage. Thenceforward the drama has flourished, and each succeeding generation has seen fresh stars rise and set in the theatrical world.

It is only with the Restoration drama that the annals of *actresses* on the English stage begin. Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I., had early made a vain attempt to introduce the French fashion of female players into her adopted country by the establishment of a French company, composed only of women, in London; but the experiment was premature, and the foreigners were hissed and pelted off the stage at their first performance. Until 1660 the female parts had always been taken by boys, and the custom survived even after women had taken their place upon the stage, since some of the more famous of the boy-actors (grown into men) continued occasionally to play their favourite *rôles* as late as the end of the seventeenth century. Kynaston, the chief boy-actor, survived till 1699, long after the ladies had ousted him from the principal parts, and in 1661 Pepys, who saw him in the 'Silent Woman,' speaks of him as 'the liveliest lady for a boy' he had ever seen. Nokes won fame as the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet,' while the 'boy' who played Evadne was beautiful even in old age. It is now ascertained beyond doubt that women first appeared on the stage between November 1660 and January 1661; on January 3 Pepys, that inveterate playgoer, tells us that he saw a 'Beggar's Bush,' 'it being well done, and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage.'

One of the first actresses was Mrs. Saunderson,¹ who married the great tragedian, Thomas Betterton. Both Betterton and his wife bore from the beginning to the end of their long theatrical career an honoured name, and attained the chief places in their company. Betterton may be justly called a child of Westminster, where he was born, bred, and buried. He was the son of one of Charles I.'s under-cooks, who is described as a gentleman, and lived with other wealthy people in Tothill Street. He was trained under Rhodes, who formed a small company of actors early in 1660, but ultimately joined Davenant and the Duke's Company. Pepys speaks of his performance of the 'Bondman' as 'above all that ever I saw.' Betterton's first real triumph was on December 28, 1661, in the part of Hamlet, which he acted to the Ophelia of the lovely Bess Saunderson, with whom he was already deeply in love, a love that was to last unsullied by jealousy for the rest of their lives. Even the turbulent audience of that day was hushed into unwonted stillness from the moment when Hamlet spoke the famous words: 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,' the enthusiasm culminating in the ghost scene when the actor's face turned suddenly as white as his neckcloth, and Mr. Pepys, vainly hushed by his next neighbour, could not forbear crying out, 'It is the best part ever done by a man.' It is said that Betterton's reading of Hamlet had been handed down to him through Davenant from the days of Shakespeare himself, and was the traditional way of playing the part. Ugly and gouty, 'with a great head, short thick neck, stooped in the shoulders, fat short arms, rarely lifted above his stomach, his left hand frequently lodged in his breast between his coat and waistcoat, while with his right he prepared his speech, his actions few but just,' Pope acknowledged him at the end of his career to be the best actor he had ever seen, and at seventy in 'Hamlet' he still, by voice, look, and gesture, appeared a young man. For fifty years, during which he created 130 new parts, no actor surpassed him in the public favour, and he was looked up to as an authority by all.

Bess Saunderson, who became Mrs. Betterton in December 1662, was not only a first-rate actress but a good woman and devoted wife a combination only too rare in those days. She played the leading female parts in the Duke's Company for thirty years with signal success, and was especially renowned in Shakespeare's heroines; a

¹ Unmarried ladies were then called Mrs., a contraction of Mistress.

last (in 1695) increasing age and failing health obliged her to give up her parts to her husband's ward, Mrs. Barry. The closing scene of Betterton's appearance is most touching. While his aged wife sat trembling with apprehension at home, the venerable actor staggered on to the stage in the old Haymarket theatre for his benefit, April 15, 1710, crippled with gout and one foot in a slipper, as the fiery Melanthius in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Maid's Tragedy.' The audience was a splendid one; even the stage was packed with great people, while the card-players actually left their games and came with cards in their hands to encourage their old favourite, the curtain descending amidst thundering plaudits. Betterton left his last triumph for his death-bed; he died (April 28), barely two weeks later, in his wife's arms.

It has been erroneously stated that Mrs. Barry, Betterton's ward, the greatest tragic actress of her generation, lies also in the Cloisters, the fact being that she is buried at Acton. When a small child of about six the charming Mistress Bracegirdle first made her *début* as a page in the same company as Mrs. Barry, and it was owing to the latter's encouragement that she took to the stage as a profession. She also was either adopted by Betterton or placed under his care, and, though inferior to Elizabeth Barry in talent, captivated every heart by her charming manners and appearance.

Her first important appearance was in a play of Congreve's, and it was in his comedies, written expressly for her, that she achieved her greatest triumphs, acting also, however, comedy and tragedy in Dryden's plays, and such adaptations of Shakespeare as were then customary, with almost equal success. 'It will be no extravagant thing to say that scarce an audience saw her that were less than half of them lovers, without a suspected favourite amongst them.' Congreve and Rowe seemed, in the plays they wrote for her, 'palpably to plead their own passion, and made their private court to her in fictitious characters.' If she favoured any one of her many suitors, Congreve was the lucky man; but, in spite of his own ill fame, Elizabeth Bracegirdle seems to have kept her fair reputation.

Mrs. Bracegirdle's career on the stage was comparatively short. In 1706-7 the star of Ann Oldfield was rising, and in a trial of strength between the two actresses, when each acted the same part on consecutive nights, the town gave the preference to the younger lady, whereupon Mrs. Bracegirdle retired in dudgeon,

rather than suffer herself to be eclipsed by her rival. Once only did she appear on the stage again, to take part with Mrs. Barry in Betterton's first benefit. She lived long enough to see the *début* of the great Garrick, and to banter old Colley Cibber on his jealousy of the young actor. So benevolent was she to the poor, especially in Clare Market near her residence, that 'she could not pass that neighbourhood without thankful acclamations from people of all degrees, so that if anyone affronted her they would have been in danger of being killed immediately.' She died in 1748, having outlived her own generation, and was buried beside her old friends the Bettertons in the East Cloister.

Ann Oldfield, the only actress buried actually inside the Abbey walls, was, while superior to Mrs. Bracegirdle on the stage, far below her in personal character. Ann was the daughter of an officer in the king's army, and, being left fatherless, was apprenticed by her mother to a seamstress in King Street, Westminster; they lived with an aunt, who kept a tavern in St. James's. Here the playwright, Captain Vanburgh, heard her recite a play one night behind the bar to her relatives and some guests, and was much struck by her talents as well as by her personal attractions. Through his encouragement the great manager, Rich, took up the humble seamstress and launched her upon a brilliant theatrical career. In those days the stage training was most severe, and perhaps for that very reason we read of one ignorant untaught girl after another turning out a finished mistress in her art. Ann at first received 15s. a week merely to appear as a mute, *i.e.* a walking lady or supernumerary on the stage. In 1700, aged fifteen, she was first allowed to take a minor part, and it is expressly recorded that she was then unable to modulate that 'silver voice' which afterwards proved her chief attraction. After three or four years' more probation she played at Bath before Queen Anne, and here the critic Colley Cibber first appreciated her powers. He unearthed an old play, 'The Careless Husband,' which he had written long before and put away in despair of ever finding an actress capable of the chief female part, Lady Betty Modish, and remodelled his heroine upon the young girl's character, even making use of many of Ann's own remarks. The play proved a great success, which Cibber generously attributed to Ann Oldfield's rendering of the part. She took Mrs. Bracegirdle's place, as has been said before, in 1706, and became the acknowledged queen of comedy, which she at first vastly preferred to tragedy, saying that she hated

having a page drag her train behind her. But in spite of this acknowledged distaste for tragedy she is said to have been inimitable in certain tragic parts, and was the original Jane Shore (1714), and the Marcia in Addison's 'Cato,' playing to Booth's famous impersonation of the hero (1713), and there is little doubt that in these parts she roused her audiences to enthusiasm. Her private character does not bear close investigation, yet such was the standard of morality at the time that she was received on intimate terms in the best society, and even at court. She died in 1730 at her house in Lower Grosvenor Street, nursed to the last by her friend, an ex-actress, Mrs. Saunders, the Betty of Pope's somewhat spiteful lines :

'Odious, in woollen 'twould a saint provoke,
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke.)
No; let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face.
One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead—
And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.'

The fact is that Mrs. Oldfield piqued herself on her taste in dress, and thus attired she was laid in state in the Jerusalem Chamber. There were the usual prayers and a funeral sermon, in which Dr. Parker, the preacher, made the somewhat equivocal remark that he buried the actress 'very willingly and with much satisfaction.' Strange as it seems nowadays, the burial of a notorious actress in the Abbey roused no opposition from anybody, the Dean and Chapter granting an easily won consent. But when General Churchill desired to place a monument there to the lady's memory, Wilcocks, the Dean, who was a Canon at the time of the unopposed burial, rebelled and refused to allow it. Before the space for burials became scarce and precious as nowadays, many persons were buried in the Abbey merely because they died in the precincts, or because their relations were willing to pay the heavy fees demanded, and this latter fact explains how it was that Mrs. Oldfield lies amidst the famous dead.

Barton Booth, who played with Ann Oldfield, was originally destined for the Church, but he ran away from home at the age of seventeen (1698), and went on the stage in the Dublin Theatre. After making a great sensation by his acting of the ghost to Betterton's Hamlet, he ultimately became the acknowledged successor of the old tragedian in popular favour, winning success not only by his talents, but by his rare personal beauty and the peculiar harmony of his voice. He is now chiefly identified with

the part of Cato, not only because his acting, coupled with Mrs. Oldfield's, won a fleeting popularity for the piece, but on account of the political allusions with which Addison had filled the play, Whigs and Tories applauding every allusion to liberty with equal vehemence. Drury Lane was crowded for thirty-five nights—an unprecedented run in those days—with ardent politicians; and at Oxford, where the company afterwards acted, crowds besieged the doors, and every corner was filled before one o'clock. Henry VIII. and King Lear were parts in which Booth also won success, but there seems little doubt that, while surpassing Betterton in appearance and voice, his acting was not equal to that of the older player whom he avowedly imitated. His health gave way early, he retired from the stage at the age of 46, and died shortly after, his end hastened by quack medicines and the violent medical treatment—bleeding, plasters, and blisters—so common in his time.

Nearly forty years (1772) after his death a monument was placed to his memory in Poets' Corner by his second wife, *née* Saintlow, once a celebrated actress herself. Booth was closely connected with Westminster—in life, because he was educated at Westminster School under the great disciplinarian, Dr. Busby; in death, from his monument, and also because two streets (Barton Street and Cowley Street) record his memory. With America too Booth is doubly associated. His family emigrated to the new world, and two of his descendants, both actors, are known to fame. One, Wilkes Booth, assassinated President Lincoln in Ford's Theatre, Washington; the other is the well-known actor, a familiar figure in Shakespearian parts on both sides of the water.

Mrs. Cibber, so long associated on the same stage with Garrick, and so like him in appearance that they might have been brother and sister, was a younger sister of the musical composer, Dr. Arne. She had considerable musical talent herself and a fine voice; her *début* was made at the Opera, and she was a great favourite with Handel, who wrote the contralto songs in the 'Messiah' and the part of Micah in 'Sampson' on purpose for her. Unfortunately for her happiness she married the ugly and disreputable son of old Colley Cibber, the well-known manager and actor. Her married life was bitterness, and finally her husband drove her to elope. The actor Richard Cumberland (who lies in Poets' Corner) saw her in her early days as the heroine in the 'Fair Penitent,' and describes her voice as 'sweet withal,' only so wanting in contrast that it wearied the ear, like 'a long old

legendary ballad of innumerable stanzas, every one of which is sung to the same tune.' This, however, was before Garrick's reforms, and later critics have only words of praise for Mrs. Cibber. Mrs. Betterton was eclipsed and forgotten in the new Ophelia of Mrs. Cibber, the best, it is said, either before or since; 'no eloquence could paint her distracted look, her fine acting in the mad scene.' Curiously enough Garrick did not believe in her capability to play what was afterwards her most celebrated part, Constance in 'King John,' but, encouraged by Quin's remark, 'Don't tell me, Mr. Garrick; that woman has a heart and can do anything where passion is required,' he allowed his judgment to be overruled, and was captivated and astonished by her powers. When going off the stage after hearing of Arthur's capture 'she uttered the words "O Lord, my boy!" with such a scream of agony as will never be forgotten by those who heard her.' In 1749 Mrs. Cibber quarrelled with Garrick and left his company, but five years afterwards a reconciliation was effected, and she did not leave him during the remainder of her theatrical career; each felt the want of the other's assistance on the stage. Mrs. Cibber's health was wretchedly bad, and, as with Booth, the doctors' treatment hastened her end. When in her last illness the king (not knowing her state of health) ordered a performance of the 'Provoked Wife,' one of her great parts, Mrs. Cibber insisted on dragging herself upon the stage to act the fashionable Lady Betty. She was carried from the theatre to her house in Scotland Yard and never left her bed again, dying in January 1766, aged 52. She was privately buried, like so many of her friends and contemporaries, in the Cloisters (North Cloister).

Two years later there died at Bath an actress, Mrs. Pritchard, considered by some critics as a finer actress than Mrs. Cibber. She is chiefly remembered now as Mrs. Siddons's greatest forerunner in the part of Lady Macbeth, though in her own day she won the most brilliant successes in comedy. As the wife of an obscure strolling actor she began her theatrical career in the booths at London and country fairs; but she was ultimately engaged at the Haymarket, and had attained a leading position on the stage ten years before Garrick's star had risen. The great actor respected though he never really liked her, and was wont to complain that in tragedy she would 'blubber her grief.' So uneducated was Mrs. Pritchard that she is said never to have read the play of 'Macbeth,' even her own part being read aloud to her

by the prompter. Whatever the truth of this, her success as Lady Macbeth was indisputable, and long after her death the critics disagreed as to whether her rendering of certain parts, especially in the banquet scene, had not surpassed the incomparable Siddons. Dr. Johnson, who called her 'an inspired idiot,' made the severe observation that only on the stage had she 'gentility and understanding,' but since the fastidious Horace Walpole, to whom she was a near neighbour, used to invite her constantly to Strawberry Hill and specially praised her behaviour in society, the old doctor was evidently too sweeping in his judgments. Horace's only remark in her disfavour is that he could not restrain his laughter at her complaints of starvation in the part of Jane Shore, which, as she was so fat that she could scarcely move across the stage, tickled his fancy. She took leave of the stage in her greatest part, with Garrick as Macbeth, April 24, 1768, and delivered a poetical farewell written for her by the versatile David. She lived till the following August, and, though not buried in the Abbey, a monument was put up to her in Poets' Corner by her admirers, the inscription written by the poet laureate, John Whitehead.

Two actors, each celebrated in different ways, died in the same year (1777), and were both buried in the North Cloister. No greater contrast could have been found than the tragedian Barry and the comedian Foote, whose wit was so captivating that even the serious Johnson was obliged to lay down his knife and fork and forego his dinner to laugh. 'The dog was so very comical—no, sir, he was irresistible.' By his cruel wit Foote won many enemies, and died of a broken heart caused by the revenge of one noble dame whom he had held up to public censure. He died October 21, 1777, on his way to seek health abroad, and was buried by torchlight at Westminster. Spranger Barry was Garrick's most famous and successful rival. Like Booth he first appeared on the stage at Dublin, where he was born in 1719. On October 4, 1746, he made his *début* in London, at Drury Lane, as Othello, and crowds rushed to see the new actor. In one part only, that of Romeo, there is little doubt that Barry surpassed his greater rival, but he challenged comparison in several other Shakespearian characters, especially in King Lear, at Covent Garden Theatre, where he acted with Mrs. Cibber, while Garrick played at Drury Lane.

Barry had many advantages, not only in his fine figure and beautiful face and voice, but he was also very well connected, and intimate with the greatest people, supping one night with the

Prime Minister, another with some leader of fashion; he won the name of Mark Anthony for his magnificent style of living. His triumph, however, was short. A venture as manager of the Dublin theatre failed; he became a martyr to gout early, losing his looks, figure, and fortune, and at last, in 1768, was glad to accept an engagement in company with his wife, the actress 'Ann Crawford,' at Drury Lane from his former rival. Garrick behaved most generously to his fallen foe. He gave the couple a salary of 1,500*l.*, and when Barry's health quite gave way added 200*l.*, with a free choice of parts, and liberty to appear only when he felt able. Yet all was of little avail. The hand of death was now on Barry, and it is sad to read of one who had fascinated all hearts as Romeo in his youth, appearing old and infirm at fifty as Othello 'in a full suit of gold-laced scarlet, a small cocked hat, knee-breeches and silk stockings conspicuously displaying a pair of gouty legs,' and playing to the Desdemona of his lovely wife. In 1774 he returned again to Covent Garden. He died three years later, and was privately buried in the Cloisters. After twenty-five years had passed, his grave was again opened to receive the coffin of his wife.

Mrs. Spranger Barry, the daughter of a rich apothecary at Bath, took to acting to console herself for a disappointment in love, and married an inferior actor, one Dancer, who died young. Ann's first recorded appearance was on November 8, 1758; she played Cordelia to Barry's Lear, but her acting made no special impression that day, and it was only after nine years' careful training from Barry himself that she took her place in the foremost rank of the theatrical profession. With the fascinating silver-tongued actor the young *débutante* fell passionately in love, and married him after the death of Dancer. The exact date is uncertain, but her name does not appear as Mrs. Barry on the playbills till she acted with her husband at Drury Lane. She first appeared in London at Foote's theatre, the Haymarket. Garrick witnessed her *début* there and much applauded her. The following year, 1678, he engaged both husband and wife at Drury Lane, and here Ann's reputation reached its greatest height. She was for long the acknowledged queen of comedy, and rivalled Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Woffington in tragic parts; while, like Ann Oldfield preferring comedy, she used to say she only acted tragedy 'to please the town.' When she was nearly forty a spectator wrote of her Cordelia, 'It is the grandest

thing of the kind I have ever seen an actress do. My fancy still feeds upon it, and the recollection will go with me to my grave.' During her whole life she is said to have had no worthy competitor in her part of Desdemona, and in Lady Randolph, her greatest rôle, in which she appeared on the stage for the last time in her farewell performance (about 1798), she is said to have even excelled Mrs. Siddons.

Though Ann Crawford was now old, coarse; and ugly, Mrs. Siddons feared her rivalry and was not ashamed to own it, but when the aged actress was foolish enough to challenge comparison with her younger rival's famous part of 'Isabella' for her benefit, no seats were taken, and she fell seriously ill with annoyance. Throughout her life she was subjected to various changes of fortune; a small weekly pension bequeathed her by her mother on condition that she left the stage was paid by a relative, who refused to accept the forfeit. Barry left her all he had to leave, and she amassed a good fortune by her own exertions, but was foolish enough to marry a third husband, a Mr. Crawford, described by some authorities as a scampish barrister, by others as a bad actor; all agree that he was much younger than herself, and proved an unprofitable husband, who spent her money and broke her heart. She died in Queen Street, Westminster, November 29, 1801, and was buried close by in the Abbey Cloisters.

Of Garrick it is impossible here to speak at length. He was a pupil of Dr. Johnson's, at Edial, near Lichfield, and travelled up to London in company with his master at the age of twenty in order to start a wine business. But wine was soon deserted for the stage, and four years later, on October 19, 1741, Garrick, announced as a 'gentleman who had never appeared on any stage' (which was not strictly accurate), took the town by storm in his famous impersonation of Richard III. Henceforth Garrick's success was assured, and for thirty-eight years he held the foremost place on the English stage. To him we owe much; no more was Shakespeare's fame insulted by plays which bore no resemblance to the original text; no more did the traditional sing-song described by Cumberland offend the ear; but while these and other improvements were made by the actor-manager at Drury Lane, one innovation found no favour in his eyes. I allude to the attempt made by Macklin, at Covent Garden, to introduce costumes contemporary with the period of the play, instead of the usual practice of wearing modern dress for every epoch, Macklin, instead of

wearing, like Garrick, the uniform of a military officer in the eighteenth century as Macbeth, tried the experiment of dressing himself and the other characters in Scotch kilts, but the attempt failed, and on his third appearance he was hissed off the stage (October 1773). John Henderson (who was buried 1785 in Poets' Corner) is said to have been the first to successfully wear Scottish costume as Macbeth. Garrick won his noblest fame in tragic parts, especially in Shakespearian characters, but so versatile was his talent that he rivalled Quin in Falstaff, and brought down the house when he played sentimental comedy or rolled about the stage as the drunken Sir John Brute. The romance of Garrick's life will be found in his marriage, and, as with Betterton, no shadow of ill fame darkened his domestic happiness. The well-known play of *David Garrick*, in which Sotheran in past years and now Charles Wyndham in his turn delight audiences, is supposed to be founded on an incident of Garrick's life. Eva Maria Violette, a young dancer who was brought to England under the protection of the Countess of Burlington and taken up by other great ladies, was for three seasons all the rage in London. She and Garrick fell deeply in love with each other, but it is said that Lady Burlington, jealous for the career of her young favourite, entreated Garrick to suppress his own passion and cure the lady of hers. On this is founded the incident of the play when Garrick feigns drunkenness in order to disgust his lady-love, but as a fact the actor seems not to have taken the Countess's hint—rather loved and won the beautiful dancer for his bride.

Garrick's farewell appearance was on June 10, 1776, as Don Felix, the hero in a forgotten comedy called 'The Wonder,' and he was so affected that he omitted the usual country dance at the end of the piece, and, instead of one of his favourite and somewhat bombastic epilogues, could only utter a few sentences when he appeared before the curtain amidst the sobs of the spectators. The night before he had taken leave of the stage in tragedy as Lear to Miss Younge's Cordelia, and parted from his companions in the green room with a solemn 'May God bless you all.' Scarcely three years were to pass before he took his leave of life, dying on January 20, 1779, in retirement, at Adelphi Terrace, Strand. Never had such signal honours been paid to an actor before; even the popular Betterton had been buried obscurely by candlelight. Now, from the Strand to the Abbey, a string of carriages blocked the way; a guard of soldiers had to keep back the dense crowds; at

the great west door, which was thrown open to receive the procession, stood John Thomas, Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester, in his episcopal robes as if some royal *cortège* were approaching. Peers carried the pall; the coffin was followed by the whole Literary Club, old Samuel Johnson standing bathed in tears by the open grave at the foot of Shakespeare's monument; beside him Sir Joshua Reynolds, Burke and Gibbon; around them were the players from Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Five years later Garrick's widow was again to be seen here when the coffin of her husband's old master, Johnson, was laid close to the spot where he himself had stood at Garrick's funeral. Forty-three years were to pass after the actor's death before Mrs. Garrick, aged ninety-eight, was laid in her husband's grave. Those who knew her in her old age describe the once beautiful dancer as 'a little bowed-down old woman, who went about leaning on a gold-headed cane, dressed in deep mourning, and always talking of her dear Davy.' Upon the monument to Garrick at Lichfield is inscribed Johnson's characteristic remark: 'I am disappointed by that stroke of death, which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure.' Here, beneath the statue in Poets' Corner, is an inscription by Pratt (substituted for one prepared by Burke), justly condemned by Charles Lamb as 'a farrago of false thoughts and nonsense.'

Mrs. Siddons and her brother John Kemble are links between the old generation of players and the modern; for five generations some members of the Kemble family were attached to the theatrical profession, beginning with the grandfather of Sarah and John, who acted under Betterton and Booth, and continuing to our own day in Fanny Kemble, whose *début* Mrs. Siddons actually witnessed. Sarah Siddons's parents were strolling players, and all their children were put on the stage as soon as they could walk. Sarah, when a toddling baby, was brought forward as an infant prodigy at her mother's benefit, but the audience were not properly impressed, and only laughed and made noises, till Mrs. Kemble came forward and reproved them by reciting the fable of the boys and the frog. At thirteen the child was playing Ariel in a barn at Worcester, and four years later we find her sustaining the principal female parts at Wolverhampton. Her *début* as Portia on December 29, 1775, proved a failure; her dress was old and shabby, her voice weak with nervousness, and, in fact, during her first engagement at Drury Lane she excited little interest. She had the honour of acting twice

with Garrick, the second time as Anne to his Richard III. five nights before he left the stage. Garrick did not appreciate the latent powers in the nervous girl of twenty-three, and though he was generous enough to recommend her to Sheridan after his retirement from the management, and always behaved to her with great courtesy, she bore a grudge against him all her life. Sheridan shared Garrick's opinion and rejected her, so she was driven to go into the provinces again, and acted at Bath with Garrick's successor, John Henderson, achieving some success; here she perfected herself in her art, and prepared for another appearance in London. Six years later she made the first of her long succession of triumphs at Drury Lane in Sothorne's tragedy of 'Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage,' her father and husband both tremblingly awaiting the result. So lifelike was her acting of the dying scene that night that her little boy of eight, who acted Isabella's son, and must often have seen his mother do the part, burst into real tears, and never had such shouts of acclamation been heard since the days of Garrick. Henceforth each new part created a veritable *furor*, and with Reynolds's magnificent picture of the Tragic Muse to give us a faint idea of her noble presence, it is not difficult to credit the rapturous enthusiasm she aroused. In Lady Macbeth she achieved her greatest triumph, and with this part her name is connected for all succeeding generations. She played the part for the first time on February 2, 1784, and caused Sheridan much anguish as she deviated from Mrs. Pritchard's reading of the part in the sleep-walking scene by putting down the candle, which the older actress had carried all the time, and going through the pantomime of washing her hands. So great was the conservatism of the stage that the manager expected an uproar from Mrs. Pritchard's old admirers, but to his delight and surprise the audience were too spell-bound by Mrs. Siddons's acting to notice the innovation. Her provincial tours were equally triumphant; only once did she meet with successful rivalry, when in Dublin the Irish rallied round their old favourite, Ann Crawford. Edinburgh went mad over her. Her theatrical career was appropriately begun and ended as one of Shakespeare's heroines, her real farewell of the stage being taken in June 1812 as Lady Macbeth, though she appeared once or twice afterwards at family benefits; for the last time as Lady Randolph, in June 1819, at the benefit of Charles Kemble. In her old age she became so stout and unwieldy that, when kneeling in a part, she had to be helped to rise. Yet Washington Irving, who did not

see her till she was old, says she penetrated in a moment to his heart, froze and melted it by turns, and that he hardly breathed while she was on the stage. Her effect on her fellow-actors was also extraordinary; as Queen Catherine on one occasion, her fiery glance at the surveyor drove the unfortunate man who acted the part off the stage, vowing that he would not encounter that awful look again for the world. In Rowe's 'Tamurlane' she once worked herself up to such a pitch of agony at the sight of her strangled lover that she fell apparently lifeless before the murderer, and the audience clamoured for the curtain, believing her dead. Behind the scenes and in private life her haughty manner, her parsimony, and insolence made her many enemies; and once in Dublin the audience, having heard exaggerated reports of her uncharitableness and meanness, actually hissed her off the stage, when she fell fainting into her brother John's arms. She was much lionised by the fashionable world, and gave readings at private houses and at the Palace; nearly all day carriages would be drawn up outside her lodgings, and, in spite of her incivility to her visitors, her receptions were thronged by rank and fashion, even the Iron Duke of Wellington uncomplainingly enduring the rudeness of the haughty actress. She died June 8, 1831, eight years after her elder brother John, and the statues of brother and sister stand together in the little Chapel of St. Andrew. John is represented as Cato, and his statue, designed by Flaxman and executed by Hinchcliffe, stood till 1865 in the North Transept, where it was appropriately placed by the sister to whom he owed so much. Through her influence he first appeared in London, in 1783, as Hamlet, and, though cold and somewhat unsympathetic, had for long no rival except Henderson in tragedy. He once, and once only, played Macbeth to his sister's famous Lady Macbeth. He became manager of Covent Garden in 1803, and revived Shakespearian plays at that theatre. Wolsey, Lear, Brutus, and Coriolanus were amongst his best parts. Sarah Siddons's statue by Chantrey was suggested by the great picture of the Tragic Muse. Macready paid for it, and Lord Lansdowne and the poet Rogers composed the inscription. With Mrs. Siddons, the last of the great tragic actresses of the eighteenth century, the muster-roll of theatrical names connected with Westminster Abbey may fitly close.

A FIRST NIGHT.

I.

‘What does Shepherd say?’

‘Well, he doesn’t say, right out, so much as he implies.’ I opened Shepherd’s letter, and glanced through it again. ‘It is easy to see that he thinks Ruthven is in a bad way.’

‘Then I shall at once get some one to take his part.’

‘He says that the mere thought of such a thing would be sufficient to send Ruthven headlong into his grave.’

Trotter became excited.

‘Then do you mean to tell me that I’ve only a choice between murder and suicide?’

‘Shepherd puts it that Ruthven has been waiting and working all his life for such a chance, and that if now he only gets it to lose it the man will break his heart and die.’

Trotter threw himself into a chair.

‘Ince, you’ll drive me mad! I consider that I’ve been badly used all through. When, at your special request, I offered the part to Ruthven——’

‘There is no man upon the English stage who could act it like him.’

‘Did I say there was? Good heavens, man, let me speak! When I offered the part to Ruthven, and he accepted it, there was not a word said about his being unwell. A few days afterwards, when the reading is called, he writes and says he is a little off colour, but that if I will send him his part he will show at first rehearsal. I send him his part. First rehearsal comes, and still no Ruthven! Second rehearsal, and still no Ruthven! Third rehearsal, and still no Ruthven! Until we have drifted where we are! Then you ask Shepherd to go and see the man, who has stuck himself in some remote hole in some remote corner of Scotland—as if he had done it on purpose!—and tell us what prospect there is of his putting in an appearance. Shepherd writes that there is little or none. Then you say that if I take the part away from him I shall send the man headlong to his grave.’

‘That’s what Shepherd says, not I.’

'Then *I* say, Shepherd be hanged! I have never met the man in my life. I have never seen him act. I know nothing about him.'

'But I have seen him act, and I know something about him, and I tell you that in a part of this particular kind he would prove that he possesses something very much like genius.'

'What has that to do with it, if the man's too ill to act? You don't propose, I presume, that he should come on to the stage the first night without having attended rehearsal at all?'

What Trotter said was true enough. And I was quite as anxious for the success of the play as he could be. As he put it—

'Anybody would think I was the only person concerned. It's your play, not mine!'

'My dear Trotter, don't hit me.'

'I should like to—or somebody. I don't know how long you mean to keep the stage waiting for rehearsal. I'm going! And after rehearsal I intend to get somebody to take his place.'

It was annoying. In writing the play, throughout it I had had Ruthven in my mind's eye. The part of Blaise Townshend was, in no slight degree, the play. As Blaise Townshend I had felt convinced Ruthven would score a success which would make 'A Story of To-day' the most successful drama I had given to the public. And now it appeared that the man was so ill that, unless we postponed the production of the piece—which neither Trotter nor I was disposed to do—the part would have to be given to some man who, in all probability, would be no more *my* Blaise Townshend than I myself should be.

When we reached the theatre, and were hurrying through the passages which lead from the stage-door to the stage, some one who was standing there touched Trotter on the arm, and stopped him.

'Excuse me—Mr. Trotter, I believe? I am Mr. Ruthven.'

'Mr. Ruthven!'

In his surprise Trotter started back and almost trod upon my toes. Here was the man standing at our elbows whom we had supposed to be lying on a bed of sickness four hundred miles away. My personal acquaintance with him had been but slight. I had seen him act in a provincial town, and had been so struck by his performance that I had gone behind between the acts and obtained an introduction. During the three or four days I

remained in the town I had met him twice or thrice again. As he stood in the uncertain light, holding his hat in his hand, his eyes fixed wistfully on Trotter's countenance, I could not but be struck by the change in his appearance. He appeared to have shrunk to nothing. He even seemed to have lost in height. His slight, fragile figure had so decreased that one felt that if it decreased much more it would reach a vanishing-point. His face was worn, and wan, and white. Trotter stared at him in bewildered amazement—so, indeed, did I.

'I may truly say, Mr. Ruthven, that this is an unexpected pleasure. I was under the impression that you were ill in bed.'

Mr. Ruthven put his hand up to his brow.

'I—I haven't been quite well.'

Trotter turned to me.

'You know Mr. Ince?'

'I ought to.'

But he did not seem as though he did. He looked at me with expressionless eyes, as though I were an entire stranger. I held out my hand to him.

'Surely, Mr. Ruthven, you have not forgotten me? I give you my word that I have not forgotten you. I would sooner see you than—anything.'

He smiled—or rather I should write that he attempted to smile, because the attempt was a failure. Trotter slipped his arm through his.

'Mr. Ruthven, we are already late for rehearsal. May I ask if you have looked at your part?'

'I am letter perfect.'

He was. He went through his lines, cues and all, without a hitch. But with what an air! With the air of a man whose thoughts were far away—of a man who took not the slightest interest in his surroundings. He certainly did not appear to be an actor who acted at rehearsals. Trotter came to me while he was going through one of his scenes.

'What do you think of him?' he asked.

'I think he's ill.'

'So do I. I'm not sure that it isn't my duty to order him straight off home to bed.'

Shortly after Ruthven joined us. Trotter made to him some half-jesting remark of the kind. He looked up at Trotter with

an air of curious hesitation. As he spoke he rubbed his hands slowly one against the other.

‘Why do you think I am ill? ‘Because I don’t act? I never do until I have got my business, and sometimes not even then until the night. But’—he turned to me—‘I like the part. I think I understand it. I shall make something of it. I know I shall. I ought to. It is now or never.’ He repeated the last word—‘never!’

‘Why do you say that?’

He stretched out his hands in front of him, with a little appealing gesture. ‘Ah—why?’

That afternoon I met Maidment of the *Evening Journal*. He fell in at my side. We walked together down the Strand.

‘Sad news this about Ruthven.’

I looked at him.

‘To what news are you referring?’

‘I hear he is at death’s door.’

‘Where did you hear that?’

‘The fellows were talking about it at the club. They talk about getting him something from the Fund. It appears that he is actually in want. Seems hard lines just when he was going to get his chance. By the way, whom are you going to put in his place?’

‘I don’t know if you are aware that Mr. Ruthven is at this moment in town?’

‘In town! Why, I just heard Farncombe saying that only the day before yesterday he left Ruthven dying at Pittenweem. It seems that Farncombe was golfing at St. Andrews, and Stanley found out by accident that Ruthven was close at hand. He went over and saw him.’

‘My information is later than Mr. Farncombe’s. I just left Mr. Ruthven at the stage-door of the theatre. He has been attending rehearsal.’

‘Attending rehearsal! Then Farncombe must have been piling it on.’

‘I have heard of stranger things. Good-day.’

I left Maidment standing on the pavement. I had not advanced another two hundred yards towards Fleet Street when I almost ran into Farncombe.

‘Hallo, Ince, you’re the very man I wanted to see. I say, couldn’t you spare a bit for Ruthven? It’s wanted badly enough.

I know his going under just now is hard upon you, but it's harder on him. His wife is in a dreadful state, and there isn't enough to pay the funeral.'

I took a good long look at Mr. Farncombe. I have known him some years. He has the reputation of being a truthful man—that is, as men go. I myself have certainly no reason to suppose that he is an habitual liar.

'I don't think that a funeral will be required—at least, just yet.'

'My dear fellow, he's doomed. The doctor told me—what, for the matter of that, I could see for myself—that, at the most, it's only a question of days, perhaps only of hours. It is quite possible that he's dead already.'

'Possible, but not probable. I think not.'

'Why? Have you had news?'

'Slight news.'

'From his wife?'

'No; from Ruthven himself.'

'You don't mean to say he has written to you? Why, when I saw him the day before yesterday, he hadn't strength enough to raise his hand, far less to hold a pen.'

'He has now; or, at least, a few minutes ago he had.'

'A few minutes ago! What are you driving at?'

'At the facts. Which are, that I have just attended rehearsal with him, and that I have just parted with him at the stage-door of the theatre.'

'Ince, you're joking.'

'Nothing is farther from my thoughts.'

'Do you mean to tell me that Ruthven—Philip Ruthven—is actually in town?'

'Unless he has just taken train again for Scotland. Which is hardly likely, since he is to rehearse again to-morrow.'

Farncombe stood stock still in the middle of the pavement. He thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets. He knit his brows. His demeanour must have struck the passengers in the Strand as strange. 'Ince, there's a mystery somewhere. I give you my word of honour that I saw Philip Ruthven the day before yesterday at Pittenweem. He was lying in bed. His wife was crying at his side. He could not speak; he could not move. At least, every attempt at movement brought on suffocation. He could only look. Such a look! If ever I saw the near presence of death upon a man's face, I saw it then on his.'

II.

It came—the first night. That night which means the prospect of a little fun to those in front, and which means something so very different to those behind. I make it a rule to shun the first nights of my own plays. I have a strong feeling that those are occasions on which the author is better away. That night I broke my rule.

All men say that they are not superstitious. But I fancy that, at bottom, and on occasion, we all of us are. I know that something told me that that night would be a night of disaster. I had never written a play of which I hoped greater things. I felt that I had put into it some of the best work of which I was capable. If it was a failure, then I was a failure too. And yet——

Several things worked together to bring about this unsatisfactory state of mind. But, oddly enough, they all grouped themselves about Mr. Ruthven. The more I saw of him the less I liked him. I found that this feeling of mine was shared by others. Trotter, in confidence, actually told me that he was afraid of him. He said that he never came near him without a shudder—that his presence filled him with a sense of physical repulsion. This was nonsense. I told him so. But I myself was conscious, in my heart of hearts, of something of the kind. And yet the man was inoffensive. He was the most retiring of mortals. He never spoke unless he first was spoken to. He never thrust himself to the front. Indeed, I wished he would have thrust himself a little more to the front. Anything more depressing than his demeanour at rehearsals I never witnessed. He acted like a wet blanket. He was absolutely lifeless! At the eleventh hour both Trotter and I wished that we were rid of him. But Trotter wouldn't take the initiative, and, ridiculous though it sounds, I felt I couldn't.

'You're the manager!' I reminded Trotter, who seemed to need reminding.

'And you're the author!'

'You engaged him!'

'At your instigation!'

'Well, you play a leading part, and if you choose to let him spoil you, it's your affair, not mine.'

‘To listen to you anybody would think that it’s a matter of complete indifference to you if he ruins your play!’

All this was of course absurd. But the consequence was that the man retained his part.

As the night approached I worked myself into a state of fever. On the night itself I couldn’t keep away from the theatre. An irresistible fascination drew me Strandwards. I was haunted by a hideous and altogether unreasonable suspicion that, at the last moment, Ruthven would play us a trick and fail to appear. As my cab drew up at the stage-door, I put the question to the door-keeper:

‘Has Mr. Ruthven arrived?’

‘Just arrived, sir.’

‘Are you sure?’

The man stared.

‘Quite sure, sir. He just went through.’

In spite of the man’s protestation I went myself to see. I knocked at the door of Mr. Ruthven’s dressing-room. There was no answer. I knocked again. Still no answer.

‘Mr. Ruthven!’ I cried.

Not a sound! I turned the handle. The door opened. I stepped inside. My first impression was that the room was empty. Then, looking round, I saw that something, some one, was lying on the floor. It was a man lying all of a heap. I am not ashamed to confess that, in the already agitated state of my mind, the sight of that heap filled me with a sense of distinct discomfort.

‘Ruthven!’ I said, ‘is that you, Ruthven?’

No reply. My impulse was to seek for help. What I did was to move forward, and lay my hand upon the recumbent mass. As I did so, it moved. A face looked up at me. It was Ruthven’s. But what a face! It was the face of a man long dead. White and drawn, with great, glassy, staring eyes.

‘Ruthven! Aren’t you well?’

He stood up, rising slowly like a corpse from a grave.

‘I am quite well.’

He did not look well. He did not sound well either. His voice was harsh and husky. There was about him an air of wildness, of abandonment, which was altogether indescribable.

‘A bit nervous, Ruthven—eh?’

‘Nervous? I am not nervous. A man in my position is not

likely to be nervous.' His manner changed. His voice rose like the wail of a trumpet. 'Why, to-night I will witch the world with acting. I will cut for your play a notch on the tree of fame. They shall acknowledge me at last. I will charm them'—he spoke with a degree of earnestness which I did not find altogether agreeable—'with a voice from the grave.'

I did not stay with him long. I did not find his company congenial.

'Mad!' I told myself, as I left his dressing-room. 'I believe the man's stark mad! I only hope that his madness has a method, and that he will do as he says, and pull the piece through. Hallo! What do you want here?'

This ejaculation was caused by suddenly encountering Maidment wandering about behind the scenes as though he were strolling through the halls of his fathers.

'I'm going in front. I thought I'd just come round and ask you what you were going to do.'

'Do you mean now, or in ten years' time?'

Maidment laughed. He seemed to think I was joking.

'Whom have you got to take Ruthven's place?'

'Confound it, Maidment, you seem to be uncommonly anxious that I should get some one to take Ruthven's place.'

He laughed again. He seemed in a laughing mood.

'How have you managed about a substitute? You must have found Ruthven's death a little awkward.'

'Death!' I fancy I started. Maidment stared at me. 'Ruthven's death!'

'Haven't you heard?'

'Heard what?'

'My dear fellow, you don't mean to say that you don't know that Philip Ruthven died last night.'

For a moment I was speechless: it was with an effort I drew myself together.

'Look here, Maidment: I have a great respect for your character, but, if you don't take care, I shall lose it. I don't know in what society you have been mixing lately, but it must have been in that of persons who are descendants in the right line from Ananias. I have just left Mr. Ruthven in his room. He is not in his coffin. He is dressing for the stage. If you require ocular demonstration of that fact, you shall have it, if you will only go in front and take your seat, and wait till he comes on.'

I had hardly rid myself of Maidment when Miss Stacey came up. She seemed to be in a state of excitement, and even of distress.

‘Now what’s to be done?’

I sighed. No more first nights for me!

‘My dear Miss Stacey, would you kindly address that question to some one else, and ask me another?’

‘But I hear that Mr. Ruthven’s dead?’

‘That is exactly what I hear. But Mr. Ruthven himself assures me that he isn’t. He is at present in his room, and tells me that he is in excellent health. He is engaged, my dear Miss Stacey, in doing what you ought to be doing, and that is—dressing.’

Two or three other people had come up.

‘What’s that? Ruthven’s not dead? Why,’ said Cardewe, ‘everybody’s talking about it at the club.’

‘Babree, of the *Herald*, just told me that he had heard of it through the Central News.’

That was Charlie Gordon! He is one of those men who are always hearing things, is Gordon.

‘Tom Dawson tells me that he has had it in a private wire.’

That was Rayne—Cecil Rayne. He’s another man like Gordon.

‘Gentlemen, if you desire to hear Mr. Ruthven’s own testimony as to whether he is or is not dead, I shall be happy to escort you, so that you may interview him in his dressing-room.’

‘Not I!’ said Gordon. ‘I wouldn’t for a fiver! I’m not fond of ghosts!’

Miss Stacey gave a little scream. She clasped her hands with what I imagine she thought was an effective gesture.

‘Joking apart,’ said Rayne, ‘I don’t like these stories being always told about a man. He ought to be dead, if everybody says he is. Upon my word, it’s quite upset me.’

I should have liked to box their ears. But a man cannot assault his company on the first night of his own play—and *before* the curtain rises! Afterwards, of course, it is a different thing.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, might I ask you to adjourn to your own apartments?’

They were just moving off, when who should come blundering up but Trotter. I immediately saw that he was as bad as they were—and worse.

‘Ince, what’s all this I hear about Ruthven? Is he dead?’

‘No, my dear Trotter, he is not dead!—not dead!—not dead! As I have just been explaining to our friends here, he is at the present moment alive and kicking in his dressing-room. Might I venture to suggest that it would be no harm if somebody else was alive and kicking in his dressing-room as well?’

I went upstairs with him. He seemed half beside himself.

‘Ince, are you sure that Ruthven’s in his dressing-room?’

‘As sure as I am that you at present are in yours.’

‘Are you sure it’s Ruthven?’

‘Do you suggest that it’s his ghost?’

‘Ince’—he caught me, with no slight pressure, by the arm—‘last night I dreamt that he was dead; not once, nor twice, but over and over again. I kept on dreaming it. I saw that he was dead; I knew that he was dead. I have stayed indoors all day to get myself a little calm. Calm! Feel my pulse; I’m in something like a raging fever! As I was coming down to the theatre half-a-dozen men stopped me to tell me that Ruthven was dead.’

‘My dear Trotter, would you like to step downstairs and ask the man himself if he is dead?’

‘No.’ He moved across the room with an unmistakable shudder. ‘Not for worlds! It—it will be time enough to meet him when we meet upon the stage. Ince, do you know that I half believe that I am going mad?’

This was pleasant hearing! Trotter, who was at once manager and leading actor, half believed he was going mad. I myself believed in Ruthven’s madness. So that it only required that I should be attacked with sudden softening of the brain to make a trio.

On all first nights everybody behind is in a state of what may mildly be termed nervous excitement. They may not always show it, but they always are. As regards nervous excitement, *that* first night eclipsed the record. Of those principally concerned *I* was the coolest. When I mention that, to the best of my judgment and belief, my temperature was about two hundred degrees in the shade, that fact speaks volumes. I had serious thoughts, even at the last moment, of enforcing a postponement of the whole affair. But I didn’t.

The curtain rose; the play began. The scene of the first act was laid in a room in a common lodging-house in the East-end of London. There was a good deal of business. The lodgers were

coming and going. The principal theme of their conversation was a great crime which had just been committed in one of the suburbs. There was one there who listened—a woman; and as she listened she knew who had done it—she recognised his workmanship. As they talked of the large reward which had been offered for the discovery of the criminal, a great hunger began to fill her soul and a desire to rise out of the depths into which she had sunk and to attain to comparative affluence by means—of the price of blood. This guilty man had been her lover. She loved him still. But she told herself that he was doomed—doomed! Some one would gain by his eternal fall; and why not she? As she went off upon her errand the man himself, against whom all men's hands would soon be turned, came on. This was Blaise Townshend, known to his then associates as 'Gentleman Jo.' He was a man who had been buffeted and torn—a genius gone wrong, an inventor none of whose inventions had attained fruition. Crammed full of ideas which seemed all to be abortions, the devil had got into him—that devil which comes to disappointed and to hungry men—and, extreme in everything, he had sunk to this—to crime.

While the opening was being played, like a restless spirit I was wandering about behind. The call was passed for Mr. Ruthven. As he came I shrank away, so marvellously did his appearance realise the creation of my fancy—the man with a devil. It was difficult to believe that this was the lifeless creature who had droned through the rehearsals. Two minutes after his entrance the house was in a tumult of applause. He had done what every actor hopes to do one day, and which scarcely one in a generation does do—he had taken his audience by storm. Instead of the disaster which I feared, it already seemed that I was within measurable distance of that stupendous, that fairylike, that world-echoing success for which we work, and of which we dream.

After Ruthven's entrance the action moved quickly. He was left alone with the journals, whose columns were filled with the story of his crime. He gloated over the hideous details with a sort of devilish exultation. While he was thus engaged a visitor entered, an unusual visitor in those parts—a lawyer who had brought him news—news of the death of a distant relative who had died in a far-off portion of the world, and who had left him one of those immeasurable fortunes which are characteristics of the day. The lawyer had come in person to offer his congratulations. And already the shadow of the gallows was falling over him. And

while the tale is being told the woman returns from her Judas-errand and hears it all. She has sold the man she loves, this ten times millionaire, for a mess of pottage. Already the avengers of blood are at his heels.

When the curtain fell the audience gave Ruthven a call which shook the theatre. It was his success, not mine; his acting which told, not that of his companions. I went on to the stage to shake him by the hand; but he walked past me as though he did not see that I was there.

‘Ruthven!’ I cried.

If he heard he paid no heed. Walking straight on, he vanished out of sight. His demeanour was so strange that I hardly knew what to make of it. Trotter was standing by me; he had been acting the lawyer.

‘He is either a genius of the first water, or else the Old Gentleman himself. When I was telling him that story about the fortune which had been left to him, the look upon his face made my blood run cold.’

‘I believe,’ said Gordon, ‘that he is the Old Gentleman.’

‘He has made me all of a tremble,’ declared Miss Stacey. She had played the woman who betrayed Blaise Townshend. ‘I really don’t think I can go on with him again; he frightens me.’

She sank into a chair and burst into something very like hysterics. I pooh-poohed their words as nonsense. I hurried them off to their dressing-rooms, but I declined Trotter’s invitation to accompany him upstairs; I went out into the street to get a breath of air. I myself was haunted by a feeling that there was something about Ruthven which was not altogether what it should be. I had no desire to make it worse by listening to Trotter’s ravings.

That night?—well, who does not know that that night was a blaze of triumph? Disaster?—disaster there was none. Ruthven went on from victory to victory—to a perfect triumph! The house was in a frenzy. Yet his companions on the stage, and those behind, shunned him as though he were the plague. Even I held aloof from the man who had done, who was still doing, so much for the offspring of my brain. There *was* something about him which certainly was strange.

The last act was on. My pulse was beating like a sledge-hammer. I was straining my ears to listen to the intense silence in which the house was hanging on Ruthven’s last great scene. Suddenly some one came rushing wildly towards me; it was

Farncombe. He appeared to be in a state of extraordinary excitement; his coat-tails were flying in the wind; his hat was at the back of his head.

‘Ince!’

It was a gasp rather than an articulate utterance. My first impression was that he was drunk, though undoubtedly he was no drunkard. He was trembling as though he could hardly stand. His eyes were unnaturally distended; his whole countenance exhibited mental disorder.

‘Give—give me a chair!’

He clutched at a chair. He sank into it, trembling all the time as though he had a fit of ague. This was a case of something more than drunkenness.

‘Farncombe, what is wrong?’

He seemed to struggle to speak.

‘Ince’—he caught at his throat as if he were suffocating—

‘Ince, have you got any brandy?’

I went to Trotter’s private store and poured him out a wine-glassful. He drank it at a gulp, neat.

‘Give me some more.’

I poured him out another glass. He drank that too; it seemed to do him good.

‘Ince, do you think I’m mad?’

‘Or drunk?’

‘You think I’m drunk? I’ve been travelling all day from Scotland; I have only just arrived in town. It is therefore extremely probable that I am drunk, it being my invariable habit to get that way when I spend the day in railway trains.’

‘I was only joking. What’s the matter?’

Directly I asked the question his trembling fit came back again. He looked about the room in such a way that I really began to think that he was in the early stages of delirium.

‘Ince, I—I saw him!’

‘Saw whom?’

‘Ruthven!’

‘Ruthven?’

‘On the stage! Great Heaven!’

He put his hands before his face; he trembled like a leaf. The case seemed clear enough.

‘Come, Farncombe, I think you would be better at home.’

He looked at me, his face as white as this sheet of paper.

'You think so? Perhaps I had. Perhaps the strain has been too great. But I must be pretty bad, because I could have sworn I saw him.'

'Of course you saw him.'

'Of course—I saw him?'

I never saw such a look of astonishment upon a person's face before.

'Where's the mystery? If you have been in front you must have seen him. Ruthven is breaking the record. I never saw such acting.'

Farncombe had stood up, rising to his feet as if automatically. Now he sank back again as if I had struck him a blow.

'It *was* his ghost!'

'His ghost?'

'Ince, Ruthven's dead!'

'Dead? You've got hold of that nonsensical story which is going the rounds.'

He looked at me in silence for a second or two. Then he put his hand into an inner pocket of his coat. He took out a pocket-book. From the pocket-book he took a folded paper. This he handed me. I opened it. It purported to be the medical certificate of Philip Ruthven's death!

'Farncombe! What—what is this?'

'The doctor's certificate.'

'Some one has been fooling you. The man is as much alive as I am.'

'Ince!'—Farncombe rose. He came close to me. He almost whispered in my ear—'I saw him die.'

'You—saw him die?'

'I saw him die. At Pittenweem, yesterday evening, at nine o'clock.'

'But—it's impossible.'

'Ince, listen to me. The other day, when you told me that Ruthven was rehearsing, I couldn't understand it. But I supposed that it was all right, until, a day or two ago, I had a letter from Mrs. Ruthven, asking for the loan of a sovereign. She said that Ruthven was at death's door, and that they were absolutely penniless. I posted straight away to Pittenweem. I found things were as she said. Ince, last night he died. His wife, the doctor, and I were present. Directly afterwards I got the doctor to give me a certificate. Mrs. Ruthven was anxious that he should be

brought to Kensal Green, where his little girl lies buried. And I thought that if I had the medical certificate in my pocket I could manage a whip among you fellows for the funds; and, later on, we might get up a benefit. Ince, where's that brandy?'

He helped himself to another glass. I felt that I myself should be none the worse for one, but I did not say so.

'So to-day I came back again. I knew this was your first night. As I was coming along I wondered how you would manage. I wondered also why you told me that cock-and-bull story about Ruthven rehearsing. Because, as Mrs. Ruthven informed me, and as I could see for myself, he had never been out of bed since the day I saw him last. It was late when I reached town. I thought I would come and see how you were getting on. I drove straight here. When I got inside, the first person I saw upon the stage was—Philip Ruthven!'

He paused. He gave a little gasp. I also was almost reduced to gasping-point.

'I caught his eye. He caught mine. He gave me such a look!'

Farncombe covered his face. He shuddered. There was an interval of silence. Then I spoke.

'But, Farncombe, he has been rehearsing all the time.'

'You don't mean it?'

'He has!'

'Then it was his ghost!'

'But, apart from any other consideration, how can that be, when you say that the man was actually alive?'

'Heaven knows! I don't!'

'He is at this moment on the stage.'

'Let me get away! Let me go home! Ince, I wouldn't meet him for a thousand pounds! If you had only seen him die!'

He hurried away. I hurried after him. As we were going the curtain fell. As it fell there rose a hurricane of applause, which seemed to shake the building. People came hurrying to and from the stage. In a moment we were in the centre of an excited crowd.

'They're calling him,' I said.

'Calling him! Philip Ruthven! Ince, Philip Ruthven lies dead in a little room which looks out upon the sea. It—it must all be some hideous dream.'

Just then Trotter came up.

'Is that you, Farncombe? Did you ever hear such a tumult? There never was such acting! No one is in it to-night but him.'

'But whom?'

'Ruthven!'

'Ruthven! Trotter'—Farncombe clutched at Trotter's arm—'it's Ruthven's ghost.'

'Farncombe!'

'It is! I swear it is! Ruthven's dead! I saw him die!'

Trotter stared; well he might.

'When?'

'Last night!'

Trotter leaned against the wall. He appeared to need its support to help him stand.

"My prophetic soul!—my uncle!" Ince, I told you he was dead! I knew he was. I dreamt it. I dreamt that I saw him lying dead, and I saw that the clock was just on nine.'

'Yes,' said Farncombe, 'the clock was just on nine.'

'Great Jupiter! And I've been acting with a ghost!'

Several others joined us.

'A ghost?' said Gordon. 'What's that?'

Trotter turned to him.

'We've been acting with a ghost—the ghost of Ruthven.'

'You're joking!'

'Ruthven's dead. He died last night at nine. Farncombe saw him die.'

The crowd fell back. Ruthven was standing within a yard of us. The tumult still continued in the theatre. I wondered, even then, if they were calling for the author. Seldom has an author felt less inclined to bow his thanks! Ruthven's eyes blazed like lightning. He seemed to have increased in height. At that moment his very personality would in itself have been almost sufficient to carry a scene.

'You saw him die!'

He addressed himself to Farncombe. He spoke with a strength of passion which was in uncomfortable consonance with his entire bearing. At sight of him Farncombe shrank away—as, indeed, we all did.

'Ruthven!'

'Yes—Ruthven!'

Ruthven stretched out his hands in front of him. He uttered his own name almost in a shriek. For a moment I thought that

Farncombe was going to have a fit, or else turn tail and flee. But he did neither. Suddenly he rushed forward at the man before us.

'It's not!' he shouted—'by the Lord! it isn't Philip—it's his brother! What a fool I've been!'

Not the least surprising incident of that night was the extraordinary change which took place in Farncombe's bearing. Ruthven broke into a peal of discordant laughter—laughter which suggested anything but merriment. He still held out his hands with the same wild gesture.

'It isn't Philip—it's his brother! Philip's dead! He died last night—in misery and beggary! His life-dreams faded, his hopes all blasted! The voice which told him that his time would come proved a liar after all!'

Advancing a step or two, he addressed himself directly to Trotter and to me.

'And I—I'm a fraud!—a swindler! It's a clear case of impersonation—send for the police! I'm only Ruthven's brother! Years ago I tried my luck upon the boards, and failed! and failed! and failed! I tried again, and failed again! I was a failure even in a booth! Ha! ha! ha! As a super I almost failed! But I knew that it was in me, all the time, if I could only get a chance, and I could only get it out. And then Philip fell ill. He had had a little better luck than mine, but he too had been kicked from pillar to post. Six months out of a shop, and six months a couple of pounds a week—that had been the sort of thing with him. I went and saw him as he lay in bed. He told me that Robert Ince had seen him act, and had offered him the big part in his new play. His chance had come at last—as he lay dying. The dream of his life was realised—when he was face to face with death. Half in joke, he put an idea into my head. He said I believed in my own powers; no one knew him up in town; why didn't I take his part? I said nothing, but I took the scrip away and read it. As I read it I knew that *my* chance had come; that this was the part of which I had been dreaming; that I was fitted to a hair; that, if I could only get the chance of playing it, this time I should not fail. I told him so. He was incredulous. He wanted at least to write and suggest me as his substitute. But I knew better. I knew that it wasn't likely that the odd man in a fit-up travelling leg-show would be allowed to create the big part in a new piece by one of the most

famous dramatists of the day, at a first-rate West-end London theatre. So he let me go. And you took me for Philip. And you thought I was a stick at rehearsals. So I was. I was half-fed, I was ill-lodged, I was pretty nearly penniless. I knew that Philip was dying. I realised, a little late, the responsibility I had taken on my shoulders. My heart sank. I began to think that, after all, I should fail. But this morning I—I heard that Philip was dead, and—and I went mad, and—and I came down to the theatre, and—and—— You hear those shouts? You hear that noise? I'm a fraud! I'm not Philip—I'm his brother! It's a clear case of impersonation! But I've not failed! Not failed!

Just then Clifford, the acting-manager, came hurrying up.

'I don't know if you're aware that there's something very like a riot in the house. I don't know what's the matter behind here, but nobody seems paying much attention. They're calling for the author!'

The author went.

OUR ARCTIC HEROES.

THE greatest interest which, perhaps, has ever been taken by Englishmen in the matter of Arctic research, was aroused by the disappearance of Sir John Franklin and his comrades in the *Erebus* and *Terror*. These two ships had left the Thames on May 19, 1845, in search of the North-West Passage to India.

In 1847, as nothing had been heard of them, it was first decided to send out a search expedition to find Sir John; and from that time onward, no less than forty expeditions were made with the same object; but none went near the spot in which the missing party might have been found. There was, however, one man who, *if his advice had been taken in time*, would actually have carried timely aid to the lost Franklin Expedition. That man was a naval surgeon, Dr. King. He held that the missing party would be found upon the western shores of King William's Island by a journey down the Great Fish River similar to that which he had already made in company with Sir G. Back in 1833-4-5. And the subsequent researches of Dr. Rae, and those of Lieutenant Hobson, proved that this was the exact locality in which the missing party would have been found.

It is very easy to be wise after the event, yet it is almost incredible that not the least attention was ever paid to Dr. King's most reasonable suggestion; and that, with the sole exception of Sir John Richardson's Expedition, which did not proceed far enough, every single searching party was sent out with directions based upon the supposition that Sir John Franklin had disobeyed his orders as to the route he was to attempt; and *therefore* that he would be found in an altogether different direction.

Dr. King and that most loving and devoted woman and wife, Lady Franklin, had from the very first held to the notion that Sir John had disappeared through having tried to follow out his instructions.

It must be remembered that those instructions were very precise and clear. They were couched in these words:—'That after passing through Lancaster Sound and Barrow Strait, he was to proceed to about lat. 74° N., long. 98° W., in the vicinity of Cape Walker (a point just to the northward of Prince of Wales's Land),

and from thence to penetrate to the southward and westward in a course as direct to Behring Strait as the position of the ice and existence of land at present unknown may admit.'

Nothing could have been more distinct than these orders, and yet only the proposals of Dr. King, the route taken by Sir J. Richardson and afterwards by Captain Collinson, were based upon the supposition that Sir John Franklin was beset in the ice in trying to carry out his instructions. The former proposed to go straight to Sir John's actual position by way of the Great Fish River; and the latter to meet him, at any point he might have reached in trying to follow the coast line of the continent of America, so as to come out at Behring Strait.

But, as we know, Dr. King's proposals were summarily rejected by Lord Palmerston's Government; Sir John Richardson turned back too soon, after having gone for some distance in the right direction, while Captain Collinson never knew, until some years later, how very near he had been to making the double discovery of the fate of the Franklin Expedition and the existence of the only navigable North-West Passage.

Of the many search expeditions it is only proposed in what follows to give a very hasty sketch of three; namely, those conducted respectively by Captain Collinson in the *Enterprise*, Captain McClure in the *Investigator*, and Captain McClintock in the *Fox*, besides making mention of the results achieved by Dr. Rae, of the Hudson's Bay Company, in his celebrated journey overland to the mouth of the Great Fish River. And the reason for making this limited selection is that both Dr. Rae and Captain McClintock discovered traces of Sir John Franklin's missing expedition, and brought home articles which had belonged to its members; while Captain Collinson only just missed anticipating them both; and Captain McClure, though far enough from the track of the ships he sought, yet actually accomplished, with the whole of his officers and crew, the North-West Passage, though compelled to abandon his ship in so doing. Yet, as a matter of fact, Captain McClure was not the first to discover the existence of a North-West Passage, for the members of Sir John Franklin's Expedition had, before they died, established the existence of another North-West Passage in a lower latitude by connecting together the surveys of Sir James Ross with those of Messrs. Dease and Simpson.

And here, while speaking of the survey of Sir James Clark Ross in this direction, mention should be made of the discovery by

him of the Magnetic Pole on the western coast of Boothia Felix. Everyone now knows that the Terrestrial Pole and the Magnetic Pole are not coincident in position, and that while the former represents the northern extremity of the earth's axis, and is, of course, in north latitude 90° , the latter is the mysterious spot to which, in whatever position of the earth's surface it may be placed, the magnetic needle always points, and this is in north latitude $70^\circ 5' 17''$, west longitude $96^\circ 46' 45''$, *i.e.* according to Sir James Ross in 1831. The probability, however, is that the position of the Magnetic Pole is not always the same, but that, as it is affected by the sun, or possibly by sun spots, it travels round in an ellipse of small excentricity and of very limited size practically in a small circle.

No one knows, and therefore no one can explain, the precise reason why a magnetised needle does point to that mysterious spot on the coast of Boothia Felix; and, strange as it may seem, there was in 1831 no visible trace of anything by which that spot could be recognised, not even so much as a small hillock in the immediate neighbourhood, and the only means of proving that the Magnetic Pole had been reached was by the total inactivity of the compass at that spot, coupled with the almost vertical position of the dipping needle. On this most interesting point the very words of Sir James Ross himself shall be given:—‘The amount of the dip as indicated by my dipping needle was $89^\circ 59'$, being thus within *one minute* of the vertical; while the proximity at least of this Pole, if not its actual existence where we stood, was further confirmed by the action, or rather by the total inaction, of the several horizontal needles then in my possession. These were suspended in the most delicate manner possible, but there was not one which showed the slightest effort to move from the position in which it was placed, a fact which even the most moderately informed of readers must now know to be one which proves that the centre of attraction lies at a very small horizontal distance, if at any.’

Theoretically speaking, the actual point of observation upon which Sir James Ross last deposited his dipping needle and compasses was one minute, or about one English mile from the true Magnetic Pole of that day, but whether one mile to the north, south, east, or west of it he was not able to decide. It would have been necessary for him to spend some little time on the spot, and to take several independent observations from

different places in different directions at a considerable distance from one another, before he could have decided so important a point. But, alas! time, provisions, and strength were alike wanting; and, even as it was, he was only just able to regain his ship in safety, his last particle of strength expended, and his last biscuit consumed. And throughout the long series of Arctic voyages this has again and again been the fate of sledging parties, namely, that just at the most critical moment, when some most important discovery was about to be made, provisions and fuel ran short, and even by the most rigid economy were only just made to hold out long enough to regain the ship, or other base of operations; and then all had to be commenced over again.

In 1850 the fear had taken a strong hold upon the mind of the nation that some serious accident must have happened to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, and in that year alone no less than ten expeditions set sail in search of the missing party. Among these was the one under the command of Captain Richard Collinson, consisting of the two sailing ships *Enterprise* and *Investigator*, the former under the command of Collinson himself, the latter of Captain Robert McClure. This latter officer had in 1837, during the American rebellion, served under the father of the writer of this narrative, when he was commodore of the Lake Squadron. And so it came about that, after rounding Point Barrow, which was then supposed to be the northernmost point of the continent of America, Captain McClure named the first unknown point of land which he discovered by the name of his old captain, little thinking that more than forty years later, when he himself would be in his grave, the son of that same old captain of his would be writing about his most brilliant achievement in Arctic discovery, and thanking him for his courtesy in perpetuating on the Arctic chart the name which he bears. These two ships sailed from England on January 20, 1850, to make the passage round Cape Horn and to enter the Arctic regions through Behring Strait. They were both provisioned for three years, although it was not at all anticipated that they would be absent so long. The *Enterprise* was much the faster vessel of the two, and she reached the Strait of Magellan eight days before her consort, and Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands six days sooner; but strange to say, by a bold attempt at a direct course to Behring Strait, instead of following the usual but more devious course for sailing ships, the

Investigator arrived first at the appointed rendezvous, Cape Lisburne, and eventually went on into the Arctic ice alone.

Captain Collinson followed closely behind, but nevertheless was unable to double Point Barrow in 1850, while McClure had already done so; and then Collinson formed what many thought an unwise decision, namely, not to spend that winter in the Arctic seas at all. Accordingly he returned by the way he came, spending the winter at Sydney in New South Wales, a proceeding which laid the foundation for much subsequent difficulty between his officers and himself. In the following year he returned north, rounded Point Barrow, and keeping in the open water which skirts the northern coast of America, which open water is caused by the effluent waters of the Colville, Mackenzie, and Coppermine Rivers flowing along the coast he followed in the track of the *Investigator*; and strange to say, like that ship, made the attempt to pass into Melville Sound by way of Prince of Wales Strait; and although he pushed his ship a few miles further into Melville Sound than the *Investigator* had been, he was unable to get through and was forced to winter there in 1851-2. Starting again in the summer of 1852, Captain Collinson, failing to round Nelson Head, the southern extremity of Banks' Land, steered at once in a southerly direction, and passing around Wollaston Land, through Dolphin and Union Strait, Coronation Gulf, and Dease's Strait, finally went into his winter quarters, 1852-3, in Cambridge Bay, at the Victoria end of Wollaston Land. And it was from this bay that Captain Collinson himself travelled with a sledge to the furthest point he ever reached, namely, Gateshead Island, where he was within forty miles of the spot where the *Erebus* and *Terror* had been abandoned, and within fifty-five miles of Point Victory in King William Island, a point to which Collinson knew that Sir James Ross had penetrated from Baffin's Bay and Lancaster Sound in 1831; and had he only decided to strike across to Point Victory, instead of returning to his ship in Cambridge Bay, he would have found himself not only the first living discoverer of the North-West Passage, but would also without doubt have discovered the cairn at Point Victory, within which Lieutenant Hobson of McClintock's Expedition afterwards found the only record we have ever had of the fate of the Franklin Expedition. It is, however, very problematical whether at the time that Captain Collinson stood on Gateshead Island, looking over towards King William Island, he could have saved the lives of any of Sir John Franklin's

party, for even then they had been out *eight* years, having originally only been supplied with three years' provisions ; and, as it will be remembered, even of this quantity nearly all the preserved meats had failed them and had been left behind at Beechey Island, their winter quarters of 1845-6, having been condemned as unfit for human food.

From Cambridge Bay Captain Collinson returned by the way he came, being unable, however, to get round Point Barrow again without spending another winter, 1853-4, in the Arctic regions ; and it was towards the latter end of 1854, or the beginning of 1855, when the writer of these lines was living with his father at the Cape of Good Hope, in the Naval Dockyard, that a very ugly-looking bluff-bowed ship made her number, as she stood into Simons Bay, which told us that the long lost *Enterprise* had returned to the land of the living, at a time when many feared she had gone down with all hands, for nothing whatever had been heard of her since she had left Sydney early in 1851. And then, within a few hours, the writer of these words sat at his dear old father's mahogany table, exactly opposite to Captain Collinson, and saw him enjoying the first good dinner he had eaten for many a long year. It was during that dinner, or rather after it, when the Arctic explorer was telling the tale of his hair-breadth escapes, that the foundation of this narrative was laid.

The *Investigator* meanwhile had fared better in all respects than her consort, with the senior officer on board, for although she left her bones to perish in the ice, yet she carried her crew so far from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, that they were able to walk over the ice from the *Investigator* in Mercy Bay to the *Resolute* at Dealy Island ; thus in their own persons making the North-West Passage, a feat which for four hundred years had often been attempted, but never before accomplished.

Looking at the perfected map of the Polar regions which we now have, it seems a very easy thing indeed to have done, but we must remember that McClure had, literally to feel his way along, and at the same time to construct his chart as he went. His ship passed through Behring Strait late in the summer of 1850, rounded Point Barrow in safety, and, hugging the American shore, attempted to pass through Prince of Wales Strait, but was stopped by the fixed ice of Melville Sound ; and, unable to retreat, was compelled to winter there. In the following summer Captain McClure retraced his steps to the entrance of Prince of Wales

Strait, and steering due north skirted round Banks' Land, which thus he had discovered to be an island, and eventually he laid up his ship in a small bay, called Mercy Bay, on the east coast of Banks' Land, where she would now be found, unless indeed the ice has caused her to die the natural death of an Arctic ship. Two more winters were spent in Mercy Bay, and much valuable work done by sledge parties exploring the adjacent coast lines. But at last the time came when provisions began to run short, and it was felt that an attempt must be made (in their case almost a hopeless one) to abandon the ship, and to travel southward to the mouth of the Mackenzie River. Had this attempt been made, and had Captain McClure abandoned his ship and started on that perilous voyage, the probability is that not a soul would have lived to tell the story of their discovery of a North-West Passage.

But just when all was ready to make a start, and the word was about to be given, 'All hands abandon ship,' Captain McClure, with his first lieutenant, thought he would go and have a last look round, and bid a long adieu to the now familiar Bay of Mercy, when all of a sudden they espied a strange-looking object approaching them. This was on April 6, 1853, when, to use Captain McClure's own words, 'we perceived a figure walking rapidly towards us. From his pace and gestures we both naturally supposed at first that he was some one of our party pursued by a bear, but as we approached him doubts arose as to who it could be. He was certainly unlike any of our men, and yet we felt certain that no one else was near. When within about two hundred yards of us this strange figure threw up his arms and made gesticulations resembling those used by an Esquimaux, besides shouting at the top of his voice words which, from the wind and the intense excitement of the moment, sounded like a wild screech; and this brought us fairly to a standstill. The stranger came quietly on, and we saw that his face was as black as ebony, and really at the moment we might be pardoned for wondering whether he was a denizen of this or the other world, and had he but given us a glimpse of a tail or a cloven hoof we should assuredly have taken to our legs. As it was we gallantly stood our ground, and, had the skies fallen upon us, we could hardly have been more astonished than when the dark-faced stranger called out, "I am Lieutenant Pim, late of the *Herald* and now in the *Resolute*; Captain Kellett is in her at Dealy Island." It can readily be imagined what astonishment these few words created when it is remembered that on July 31

or August 1, 1850, Captain Kellett, in the *Herald*, had parted with the *Investigator* after passing through Behring Strait from the Pacific; and, strange to say, the very last officer of the *Herald* to leave the deck of the *Investigator* off Point Barrow had been Lieutenant Bedford Pim, while on that April 6, 1853, the dark-faced stranger who came to the rescue of the starving heroes of Arctic discovery was the very same officer, under the same captain, having in the meantime returned round the Horn to England, and gone north again, in another ship, through the Atlantic by way of Baffin's Bay and Lancaster Sound. So that the mysterious stranger who suddenly appeared before the astonished McClure well knew the cause for the start of incredulity with which his speech was received: 'I am Lieutenant Bedford Pim, late of the *Herald*, and now in the *Resolute*. Captain Kellett is in her at Dealy Island.'

Thus the whole party were rescued, walking safely over the ice of Melville Sound to the *Resolute*, and thence in detachments were taken back to England; not indeed having found Sir John Franklin, or any traces of him, but having made, in their own persons, the long sought after North-West Passage from ocean to ocean. It had never been done before, and in all human probability it will never be done again.

It was just after this time, when no one expected further tidings of Sir John Franklin and his party, that Dr. Rae, who had simply gone out on a geographical expedition to connect Sir James Ross's Magnetic Pole with his own former discoveries to the southward of it, sent home the startling intelligence that he had met an Esquimaux who told him that a large party of white men had died of starvation, a long distance to the westward, and beyond a large river, and this river he thought was Back's Great Fish River, an idea which afterwards proved to be correct.

The story told to Dr. Rae by the Esquimaux was that, six winters before, while some of his countrymen were killing seals near the north end of King William Island, about forty white men were seen dragging a boat and sledges over the ice on the west side of the island. All the men, he said, hauled the drag ropes except one tall, stout, middle-aged officer (doubtless Captain Crozier). And further, he said, they were evidently in want of provisions, and signified by signs that they were going where they expected to find deer to shoot. Later on in the same season the corpses of thirty persons and some graves were discovered on the continent of America, and five dead bodies on an island near it.

These without doubt were the last survivors of the Franklin Expedition. Some of the bodies were in a tent, others under a boat, which had been turned keel up so as to form a shelter, and some were scattered about in different directions. Dr. Rae on this expedition succeeded in purchasing from the Esquimaux various articles, especially silver spoons and forks, which had belonged to different officers of Franklin's ships, and which had their initials or crests engraved upon them. Upon his return, the sum of 10,000*l.* was paid to him and his party as the reward offered to anyone who would obtain authentic information of the fate of the Franklin Expedition.

Later on—*i.e.* in 1855—our Government requested the Hudson's Bay Company to send another party down the Great Fish River to explore its estuary, and search for any further traces of our missing countrymen. Accordingly Mr. Anderson, one of their factors, was selected for this purpose, and he too discovered traces of the Franklin party at the rapids, just below Franklin Lake. He also discovered the spot on Montreal Island where the Esquimaux had broken up the boat; but he could not find a scrap of paper or a record, or a single human bone, or even a grave. The relics of the Franklin Expedition before mentioned were exhibited in the Naval Exhibition at Chelsea in 1891, and they are now to be seen in the Museum at Greenwich Hospital.

Very naturally, Lady Franklin was not satisfied with this negative result; and she urged the government of that day to send yet another searching expedition by sea to King William Island, or its vicinity, for the purpose of clearing up the mystery and uncertainty which surrounded the fate of her beloved husband and his gallant companions. But in this she failed. Yet, nothing daunted, she herself, almost at her own cost, fitted out the yacht *Fox*, and, placing her under the command of Captain Leopold McClintock, sent her out in 1857 to go and bring her back tidings of her lost husband.

At first the *Fox* was most unfortunate, for, in trying to make the North Water at the head of Baffin's Bay, she was beset in the pack, and drifted helplessly with it for 242 days, for 1385 statute miles, thus losing a whole season.

The next year she returned to the charge, passed safely up Baffin's Bay into the North Water, across through Lancaster Sound and Barrow Strait, down Prince Regent's Inlet, almost through Bellot Strait, near the western entrance of which, in a

small bay called Kennedy Harbour, the gallant little *Fox* was frozen in for her second winter. And from thence McClintock equipped those three sledging parties, two of which were destined to solve the question of the fate of the Franklin Expedition, and the early death of Sir John himself; and the other to add many hundreds of miles of undiscovered land to the Arctic chart.

The first party, under the charge of Captain Allen Young, was to examine the land to the westward of Cape Bird, off the western entrance to Bellot Strait; the second, under the command of Lieutenant Hobson, to go down the west coast of Boothia Felix, and, crossing over to the north end of King William Island, to explore a portion of its western shores in search of traces of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, and thence over to Gateshead Island so as to connect if possible that point with Mr. Wynniatt's furthest; the third, under the command of McClintock himself, was to accompany Lieutenant Hobson as far as King William Island, and from thence to pass, by the eastern coast of that island, to the mouth of the Great Fish River, returning to the *Fox* by the western side of King William Island.

On the way down McClintock and Hobson met some Esquimaux, who told them that a long time ago two ships had been wrecked off their coast; that one ship went down as she was, while the other was driven on shore, but the exact spot mentioned could never be found. One of the natives said that when they boarded the stranded ship they found the body of one man, but that the rest of the crew went away to the large river. Lower down some more Esquimaux were met with, and these were found to be in possession of silver spoons and forks bearing the crests and initials of Sir John Franklin, Captain Crozier, Captain Fitzjames, and others. These articles McClintock obtained from them at the price of four needles each. Going on further south, Montreal Island and Point Ogle were each visited, but without result of any kind. Returning up the western shore of King William Island, the first trace which McClintock met with of the missing crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror* was the skeleton of a single man, apparently an officer's servant or a ship's steward. Off Cape Herschel McClintock found a small cairn erected by Lieutenant Hobson, who had been there but six days previously, and who had left a letter for his commanding officer saying that, although he had failed to find any traces of the wrecked ships in the position described by the Esquimaux, yet he had succeeded in discovering

the only written record of the doings of Sir John Franklin and his companions since parting with the whalers at the head of Baffin's Bay; the only record indeed of any kind which has ever been discovered from that time to this.

That record was found in a cairn which had been erected by the retreating Franklin party at Point Victory, the nearest point of land to the place in which the *Erebus* and *Terror* had been abandoned. It was simply a printed paper supplied to all discovery ships; and upon it was written, apparently by Lieutenant Graham Gore, the following account, and although Arctic travellers and those who have taken an interest in Arctic researches are quite familiar with it, from reading McClintock's charming book on 'the fate of Franklin and his discoveries' commonly known as 'the Voyage of the *Fox*,' yet for the benefit of others, who have never seen it, the record is here repeated. It runs thus:—'28th of May, 1847, H.M. ships *Erebus* and *Terror* wintered in the ice in latitude 70° 5' N.—longitude 98° 23' W., having wintered in 1846–7 at Beechey Island in latitude 74° 43' 28" N.—longitude 91° 39' 15" W., after having ascended Wellington Channel to latitude 77° and returned by the West side of Cornwallis Island. Sir John Franklin commanding the expedition. All well. A party consisting of two officers and six men left the ships on Monday, 24th May, 1847.'

There is a slight inaccuracy in this record, as the date of the two ships wintering at Beechey Island was 1845–6 and not 1846–7. The winter of 1846–7 was clearly spent in the ice in the position described in the document. We know, therefore, that on May 28, 1847, all was well with the expedition, and doubtless all were yet full of hope that they would accomplish the desire of their hearts and make the North-West Passage.

But upon the same paper a later date and further record was added, and the writing was in another hand, as follows—'April 25, 1848.—H.M. ships *Erebus* and *Terror* were deserted on 22nd April, five leagues N.N.W. of this, having been beset since 12th September, 1846. The officers and crews consisting of 105 souls, under the command of Captain F. R. M. Crozier, landed here in latitude 96° 37' 42" N.—longitude 98° 41' W. Sir John Franklin died on the 11th June, 1847; and the total loss by deaths in the Expedition has been to this date nine officers and fifteen men.' This was signed by both Captain Crozier and Captain Fitzjames,

and a footnote added 'and start on to-morrow, 26th, for Back's Fish River.'

And then commenced that fatal march when no less than 105 brave English sailors started to walk, and to drag heavy boats, along the shores of King William Island, hoping to reach the mouth of the Great Fish River, and to ascend it to one of the Hudson's Bay Company's stations, from whence succour could be had. And it is lamentable to think that at the very moment when Captain Crozier penned those last few words which ever in this world he was to write—'and start on to-morrow, 26th, for Back's Fish River'—there was a noted Arctic traveller, a former companion of Back's, begging and entreating of the English Admiralty Board of that day to let him go to the help of Franklin's party by way of that very Great Fish River, with every inch of which he was acquainted, and at the entrance to which he would have come upon the famishing party just in time to save their lives.

Captain Crozier and his party of 105 English sailors left their ships on April 22, 1848, but on June 10, 1847, Dr. King wrote a letter to Earl Grey, the then Colonial Secretary, pointing out that the missing expedition was in all human probability on the western coast of North Somerset, which then was thought to be only a continuation of King William Island; and that, therefore, its members would be found by a journey down the Great Fish River. Will it be believed? His letter was certainly officially acknowledged, but it never received any answer at all. Amongst all the many and costly expeditions which had been sent out by a grateful country, surely one more might have been encouraged, and that a most inexpensive and simple one, the *raison d'être* of which was the almost absolute certainty that an English naval captain *had* gone whither his instructions directed him to go.

And meantime those poor souls starved and hoped, and dropped down dead as they walked; and, of all their number, only the corpses of thirty men and a few graves were found at the mouth of the Great Fish River, five dead bodies on Montreal Island, the skeleton of the steward, and two skeletons in a boat about fifty miles from Point Victory.

The supposition is that the fatal retreat was made some time during the short summer of 1848, and that, with the exception of those few whose bodies were discovered, all the rest had found a grave at nature's hands in the shape of the winter snow, beneath which all traces of them were hidden from the view of both Hob-

son and McClintock, who travelled over the very same ground as that by which the retreating Franklin party had endeavoured to reach the Great Fish River, but which, when those two officers passed over it, was covered with thick snow, beneath which all the rest were lying buried, as it was in the case of the one solitary skeleton found by McClintock, and of which he writes, 'Shortly after midnight of the 25th May, when slowly walking along a gravel ridge near the beach, which the winds kept partially bare of snow, I came upon a human skeleton, partly exposed, with here and there a few fragments of clothing appearing through the snow. The skeleton, now perfectly bleached, was lying upon its face; and it was a melancholy truth that the old Esquimaux woman spoke when she said, that they fell down and died as they walked along.'

It was then eleven years since all this had happened; it is now just four times eleven years; and while men and women, not then born, are now reading this narrative of facts, comfortably seated by their firesides, those whitened bones of Arctic heroes long gone to rest still lie bleaching beneath the northern snow, their faces turned towards that far-off home they never more could reach, and looking to the very last for help that never came.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FRANK TAKES A CONSTITUTIONAL.

ONLY a few exceptional persons—and these are for the most part women—can really like country-house life during the height of the summer. Still the course of this world is so providentially ordered that compensations are almost always discoverable, and it may be regarded as some sort of compensation for the lack of anything to do which belongs to the months of July and August that hostesses are usually willing to let you do what you please at that season of the year, so long as you absent yourself from the house between meal-times. Frank Innes, therefore, was asked no questions and was driven to resort to no prevarications before he set forth, on that hot, cloudless Wednesday morning, to walk to the village of Stoke Morton, which was situated at a distance of nearly four miles from Swinford Manor. His way lay across level lands and broad fields of wheat and barley; there was no shade and no breeze; for choice, he would naturally have preferred to be seated either upon or behind a fast-trotting horse; but he had deemed it unwise to embarrass himself with a groom, and he plodded along cheerfully enough, with the church-spire which marked his destination growing more and more distinct every minute against the soft blue sky.

Of course he arrived long before the appointed hour and had time to learn by heart the names and ages of all the rude forefathers of the hamlet; but he did not mind waiting. He would have waited contentedly all day and all night if he could but have felt positive that Lady Florence would prove faithful to her tryst; but what kept him in a fever of heat, impatience, and anxiety was the thought that perhaps, after all, she might have been detained at home against her will. The dead silence of noonday added confirmation to his misgivings: surely in that universal stillness the wheels of a pony-cart must have been heard half a mile away

if there had been the sound of any wheels to hear! When the husky old clock over his head struck half-past twelve, he was a miserable and despairing man. It seemed certain that she could not have come, because she was sure to be due at home for luncheon, and nobody lunches later than two o'clock, while some people lunch half an hour earlier. He had decided that he would make his way to the almshouses and ask for old Eliza—old Eliza who, although not the rose, had lived so near the rose—when he was made to start abruptly to his feet by a smart dig in the back. There she was! She had stolen noiselessly across the grass behind him and was smiling at him calmly, the outstretched sunshade with which she had assaulted him in her hand.

'Great success!' she exclaimed, breaking out into a peal of laughter. 'I have been watching you for the last three minutes, and I thought I would make you jump if I could. How you *did* jump! Another grain or two of powder and you would have been clean out of your skin! Yet one would have thought that you might have expected to see me.'

This was all very well, and Frank, being as youthful as his companion, enjoyed himself for a short space after a juvenile fashion; but when he had made her sit down upon a flat tombstone beside him, he pointed out to her that the occasion was not one for thoughtless merriment. 'It's serious, you know—most abominably serious,' said he. 'And I suppose,' he added, with a sigh, 'our time is limited, isn't it?'

Lady Florence glanced at the little watch which she wore in a bracelet on her wrist. 'Limited to a quarter of an hour,' she replied; 'there's no stopping Eliza when once she begins to talk. Even as it is, I shall have to flog the pony, who is as fat as a pig and as lazy as a tortoise.'

'Only a quarter of an hour!' groaned Frank. 'And there is such a lot to be said!'

'Oh, no; indeed there isn't,' returned Lady Florence, the smile fading from her lips; 'there's nothing to be said—nothing that can make any difference. I wanted to see you just once more, that was all. You can't save me, and I can't save myself.'

'What do you mean?' cried Frank in consternation. 'Not that you have knocked under to that wicked old mother of yours, and that you are going to accept Galashiels! Oh, no; nothing would make me believe that of you!'

'Why shouldn't you believe it?' asked the girl. 'That sort

of thing does happen ; it is always happening. It doesn't happen in novels and plays, except as an introduction to a catastrophe ; but in real life it is as common as possible, and catastrophes don't follow. How can it be helped ?'

'How can it be helped ! Why, by the least little show of obstinacy, I should think. How can it be done without your consent ? You said the other day that you hadn't promised me not to marry that cad ; but you did promise—or, at all events, I understood you so. And you told me that you loved me too. Have you changed since then ?'

'My being here doesn't look as if I had, does it ? You can't understand, and it wouldn't be any use to try and make you understand. If I am not to marry you—and of course that is impossible—I don't think I care much whether I marry Lord Galashiels or somebody else. I shan't be allowed to remain single, and it is better to have a tooth out at once than to suffer tortures for a year, or two years, and then have to go to the dentist's after all.'

'You talk as if they could make you marry ; but they can't really make you—you know they can't ! And as for our marriage being impossible, it's nothing of the sort. I am perfectly certain that by the time that you are of age I shall be earning a large enough income to marry upon ; the only question is whether you care enough for me to wait until then. Of course I mustn't and I won't ask you to bind yourself ; still, when you come to think of it, that *is* the only question.'

Frank spoke with a great deal of emotion and with some unintentional sharpness. It seemed to him that a love which could not hold out against the futile menaces of a painted old shrew was hardly worthy of the name of love, and, although he had disclaimed any pretension to bind Lady Florence, he thought in his heart that she ought to proclaim herself either bound or free. Why had she consented to meet him if that was all that she had to say to him ?

She threw an appealing glance at him, which he did not choose to see, and remarked : 'I knew you wouldn't understand ; men never do. It's because you don't live at home. You have rows with your fathers sometimes about bills and things ; but as soon as the row is over you go away, and there's an end of it. There's never an end of it with girls : besides, we can't feel sure that we aren't undergoing miseries which you have no notion of for

nothing. I think I know that you love me now ; but I don't know in the least, nor do you, that you will love me when I am twenty-one. So you see——'

'I see,' interrupted Frank, 'that you are ready to surrender yourself, soul and body, to Lady Burcote and Galashiels ; that's all I see at present. And I must say that I thought you had more courage.'

Lady Florence snatched her handkerchief out of her pocket and began to cry. She declared, between her sobs, that she had always been accounted plucky and that she would brave her mother if anything could be gained by braving that redoubtable lady. But what hope or chance was there ? 'I shall never be allowed to see you ; I shall never know where you are or what you are doing ; you will meet heaps of girls much nicer in every way than I am ! I am not heartless or selfish, though you want to make me out so, and I can't help it if you prefer scolding me to allowing me just one happy quarter of an hour to look back upon. I wish I hadn't come here !'

When lovers fall out, and when one of them has recourse to tears, we all know what line of action the other is prone to adopt. Frank was not disobedient to the behests of Nature, and an incipient quarrel was speedily resolved into a renewal of vows which may mean much or little, according to circumstances. How much they might mean, in this particular instance was just what Mr. Innes was very eager to ascertain as soon as he recovered partial possession of his reasoning faculties ; but the information vouchsafed to him was scarcely as definite as he could have wished it to be. Lady Florence, by the time that her pony-carriage had been waiting ten minutes for her at the lych-gate, had indeed promised that she would do her utmost to remain faithful to him ; but she had not distinctly specified what was implied in her utmost. How could she ? 'All sorts of dreadful things may happen,' she said. However, she did think that she might undertake to refuse Lord Galashiels a second time, and perhaps, since he was so bumptious and self-satisfied, he would go off in a rage and decline returning thrice to the charge. Meanwhile, she implored Frank to leave the neighbourhood. She dared not run the risk of meeting him privately again, while it would be both dangerous and unsatisfactory to meet him in public. By all means let him go abroad and study music, as he proposed ; if they both kept up their friendship with Miss Rowley, some means of indirect communication

might be discovered later on. But for the present it was much safer and better that the English Channel, as well as several hundred miles of dry land, should be placed between them.

Fortified by these somewhat vague assurances, and comforted by others which have not been recorded here, but which were not at all vague, Frank plodded back towards Swinford Manor, sublimely indifferent to the circumstance that his prolonged absence might have been noticed and commented upon. The sunny landscape looked less flat and uninteresting and unsympathetic than it had done a short time before; the heat felt less oppressive; the world appeared to be, upon the whole, a better and more cheerful place; though, to be sure, it still admitted of improvement. The mere fact of having heard a girl say 'I love you' should not (especially when she has already said the same thing a score of times) suffice so to affect the mental condition of a sensible man; but if we were all sensible, we should never be young, and if we were never young, our birth would be an unqualified misfortune.

A gentleman who, although still young, enjoyed the reputation of being rather more sensible than the majority of his neighbours chanced at that moment to be giving himself and his cob a little gentle exercise by cantering along one of the grass-bordered lanes which Frank had to traverse, and he drew rein on catching sight of the pedestrian.

'Hullo, Frank!' he called out; 'where have you sprung from?'

'I haven't sprung from anywhere in particular,' answered the other. 'I'm staying with Miss Rowley, you know, and I'm out for a constitutional. One can't loaf about the garden all day long. It would be more to the purpose if I asked you where you had sprung from. I thought you were bound to be within hail of Westminster and Whitehall.'

'Not during the recess,' said Douglas, smiling. 'I came home last night, and I am all alone; so when you are tired of loafing about Miss Rowley's garden and taking constitucionals, perhaps you will come and keep me company.'

Frank shook his head. 'Thanks awfully; but I'm afraid I can't,' he replied. 'I'm going abroad to complete my musical education, and I ought to be off at once.'

'What—this very day?'

'Oh, I don't know about to-day; but to-morrow or next day,

perhaps. You see, if I'm to do any good, I must look sharp about it.'

'That's it, is it? H'm!—well, I dare say you are right, and I doubt whether you are doing much good here, any way. There's a jaunty, unconcerned look about you, my dear Frank, which is evidently meant to conceal either grief or guilt. One doesn't want to display impertinent curiosity; still, if you didn't mind telling me, I *should* like to know whether Lady Florence ordered you out of the country when you met her just now.'

'How on earth did you know that I had met her?' exclaimed Frank, opening his eyes.

'I didn't; it was only a shot. I had heard that she was in these parts, and I couldn't quite believe that you were tramping across country under a broiling sun merely for the purpose of keeping your fat down. That young woman seems to have all the imprudence, as well as the prudence, of her family. I won't betray either her or you this time; but I'm glad she has persuaded you to take yourself off, and I hope you won't arrange any more clandestine meetings with her after she has become Lady Galashiels. It wouldn't be an altogether unprecedented thing in her family, you know, to——'

'Oh, shut up!—shut up!' interrupted Frank; 'you don't know what you are talking about. There's nothing in common between her and her sisters. Besides, she isn't going to be Lady Galashiels. At least, I hope and believe she isn't. I should like to tell you all about it; only I can't if you will persist in misrepresenting people.'

Douglas declared that he would abstain from misrepresenting anybody, and, in consideration of that formal promise, he was at once admitted into the full confidence of his cousin. He could, however, only shake his head over the recital of Frank's intentions and hopes.

'The fact is that you are asking too much,' he said. 'It's a simple enough matter for you to wait a year or so, but I suspect it would be a precious hard matter for her. Moreover, I must confess that I don't feel as sanguine as you do about your making a lot of money in a short time. I may be able to help you out a little; but what I could offer wouldn't be nearly enough to tempt Lady Burcote, and——'

'But, my dear old man, the point of the whole thing is that we aren't going to ask Lady Burcote's leave; we're going to be of

age and assert our independence, don't you see? And I certainly couldn't think of letting you help me out with money more than you are doing already—perhaps not as much. The way you really could help us—you and Miss Rowley—would be by acting as sort of links between us during all the long time that we shall be separated. I don't mean to suggest that you should convey letters, or anything of that kind; but you might just remind her of me every now and then, and perhaps she might sometimes give you a message for me.'

Douglas shook his head more emphatically than ever. 'Quite out of the question,' he answered. 'Miss Rowley, of course, can do what she pleases; but I am not going to be mixed up with anything underhand. Moreover, you make a very great mistake if you fancy that Lady Burcote's power consists in her legal privileges. I suppose you will think me unfeeling; but really and truly you had much better make up your mind at once to the inevitable.'

Frank shrugged his shoulders. 'To tell you the honest truth, I do think you're a little bit unfeeling,' he confessed; 'still, I don't deny that you are right, from the common-sense point of view. There are other points of view, though; and Miss Rowley, who has about as much common sense as most people, can see them. I wish you would come over and have a talk with her, because I'm sure she is on my side, notwithstanding her pretence of washing her hands of the whole business.'

'I shall be very glad to go to Swinford Manor if Miss Rowley invites me,' answered Douglas; 'but I am afraid I can't go unless I am asked, for I have been in her black books of late—why I can't tell. One never can tell what women are after, and I shouldn't advise you to rely too much upon her partisanship. Not that you will listen to my advice, or that my talking your affairs over with her would serve any purpose.'

'Douglas,' said Frank gravely, 'I'll tell you what it is: you're soured. That's what's the matter with you; and a great duffer you are to allow yourself to be soured in this way. Now, I was talking the other day to Leonforte, who isn't half a bad fellow when you get to know him, and my belief is——'

'For Heaven's sake,' exclaimed Douglas, gathering up his reins hastily, 'let that sleeping dog lie! I have heard and seen more than enough of him, and I assure you you won't sweeten my sour nature by repeating any of his speeches to me. Be off to

foreign lands, and let me have a line from you as soon as you have come to your senses.'

Frank received a severe scolding, that afternoon, from his hostess, who contrived without much difficulty to extract from him an unreserved confession of what he had been about. She told him that such goings-on would not do at all, and expressed the utmost astonishment when he boldly asserted that she had given a tacit consent to them.

'Oh, you're crazy—downright crazy!' she declared; 'it would be a waste of breath to dispute with you. Indeed, your craziness is the only excuse for your reckless behaviour. A pretty mess you would have landed me in if Lord Burcote had caught you embracing his daughter! Happily, you are going abroad: if you had been going to stay in England, I suppose one's clear duty would have been to send you flying out of one's front door. By the time that you come back again the stern logic of facts will probably have convinced you that there isn't much room for romance in the nineteenth century.'

'That's Douglas's view,' remarked Frank. 'I wasn't surprised at him; for he has had rather a sickener, and perhaps it's only natural that he should be down upon all women; but I didn't expect to hear such sentiments from you. Why should you take it for granted that Florry has no heart and no courage?'

'I take it for granted that Florry, as you call her (and as you have no business to call her), is a girl like another; and Douglas Colborne was no fool if he told you that there are a thousand complications which are likely to prevent her from doing what you so coolly request her to do. You have seen him, then?'

'Yes; I met him on my way back from Stoke Morton. I wanted him to come over here and have a chat with you; but he said he was in your black books, for some reason or other, and he wouldn't come without a formal invitation. I was sorry at the time; I don't much care now, since it seems that you quite agree with him.'

'So far as you are concerned, I probably do agree with him. I didn't know I had disagreed with him about anything else, and I can't think what he meant by saying that he was in my black books. However, I dare say he will recover himself in time, and if he doesn't, I must endeavour not to break my heart. Did you say you would have to leave to-morrow?'

Frank had not contemplated quite so precipitate a departure;

but his feelings were hurt, and he replied unhesitatingly that such was his intention. He was not pressed to reconsider it ; only, on the following morning, just as he was taking his leave, Peggy could not restrain herself from breathing one or two parting words of comfort to him.

‘ I can’t do anything for you,’ she said ; ‘ you oughtn’t to have expected it. Still I don’t mind owning that I wish I could. And if I were in your place—well, I won’t say what I was going to say ; but you may take my word for it that, in cases of this kind, an ounce of audacity is worth tons of patience. Goodbye : you won’t be forgotten before the autumn. At least, I don’t think you will.’

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DR. SCHOTT PRONOUNCES SENTENCE.

THE Countess’s health did not improve, while her spirits and her temper remained in an unsatisfactory condition, after her summary dismissal of Leonforte. She did not want to stay in Paris ; but she did not particularly want to go anywhere else, and it was only in obedience to the reiterated entreaties of Dr. Schott that she consented at length to betake herself to Aix-les-Bains for a time.

‘ God knows,’ said the Doctor confidentially to the Baroness von Bickenbach, ‘ it is not the waters of Aix-les-Bains, or of any other place where there are mineral springs, that will do her any good ; but she must be amused somehow or other, and I have found out that she will be *en pays de connaissance*’ (*bays de gonnnaissance*, he pronounced it) ‘ down there. She will meet the Duchesse de Chalmaison, the Princess Kischineff and other great ladies, not to speak of a swarm of those young Frenchmen with whom she likes to surround herself, and who, between ourselves, are not the finest specimens of a decaying race. Still, provided that they amuse her, that is all that we need to ask of them.’

Bickenbach sighed and remarked that she would rather have heard that the Countess proposed to spend the summer in England.

‘ Suggest that plan to her, then,’ returned the Doctor, shrugging his shoulders. ‘ It did not succeed very well last time ; but if you believe in a repetition of the dose, by all means suggest it. For my own part, I am not anxious to have my head bitten off.’

Perhaps Bickenbach was equally devoid of any such ambition, or perhaps, having burnt her fingers once, she shrank from trying further experiments upon a lady who was not much given to accepting unasked-for advice. At any rate, she kept her opinions to herself; and, after all, Aix-les-Bains, when the establishment had been transferred thither, seemed likely to produce the desired effect upon the invalid.

The Countess was really an invalid by this time. Her cough was excessively troublesome; she had lost weight; she slept badly, and her nerves were in such a constant state of irritation that she was by no means the pleasantest person in the world to live with. Nevertheless, she did derive benefit from the change of scene and from the society of the bright little Savoyard watering-place. The French Duchess, the Russian Princess, the pallid dandies—all these people, with their chatter, their *liaisons*, and their wearisome old scandals, did not satisfy her soul; yet they filled up her time, and she could not help associating with them. In Paris she could live alone, shut her doors against visitors, and brood over her troubles; but such a mode of existence was scarcely possible at Aix, and, in spite of herself, she yielded to the influence of surroundings which, when all was said, had become not only habitual but almost essential to her. That kind of thing was life, so far as life could be understood or enjoyed by a woman in her position: she did not forget that she had tried something different and that she had not liked it.

So she joined in picnics and excursions; she dined with her friends, and her friends dined with her; and Bickenbach, to whom Leonforte's disappearance from the scene had come as an immeasurable relief, began to hope that happier times were in store for her and for her patroness. This excellent and kind-hearted woman received a shock as terrible as it was unexpected when she was joined, one evening, on her way homewards from a sketching expedition, by Dr. Schott, who was smoking a long pipe and contemptuously surveying the smartly attired passers-by.

'What a deplorable crew!' he exclaimed. 'Three fourths of them will be dead five years hence, and it will serve them right, and the world will be well rid of them. The world is already overpopulated; it has no need of people who can only prolong their useless existence by means of mineral waters and baths. Admitting, that is to say, that the mineral waters and baths do prolong the existence of those who resort to them—which is extremely doubtful.'

The Baroness shook her fore-finger at him with middle-aged sprightliness. 'Oh, what a shocking doctor!' she cried. 'It does not become you to sneer at your own remedies—particularly when they have turned out to be so efficacious in the case of your own patient. During the last week the Countess has become almost herself again, Heaven be praised!'

'Praise Heaven as much as you please,' returned Doctor Schott, removing his pipe from his lips and blowing a cloud of smoke into the still air; 'there can be no harm in your doing that, although you might have selected a more fitting occasion for thanksgiving. Certainly the Countess is herself; Heaven, which sent her into being with an inherited tendency to phthisis, has not seen fit to make her the subject of a miracle by converting her into somebody else. In our days miracles no longer occur; and that is why the Countess Radna will be dead and buried as soon as the rest of them—perhaps sooner. For my part, I do not return thanks and I do not complain: what cannot be helped can only be submitted to.'

Bickenbach dropped her sketching-book and threw up her hands. '*Ach, du lieber Gott!*' she shrieked. 'But you are not serious!—you do not mean what you say!'

'I mean,' returned the Doctor composedly, 'that there is organic disease. I do not say that she is dying. With care, she might be kept alive for an indefinite length of time; only she is a bad patient, because she is so excitable. This place has done her good mentally; physically she is neither better nor worse than she was when she left Paris. We all know how the body is affected by the mind, and it is doubtless important that her life should be made agreeable to her: it is also very important indeed that she should not catch cold. But if you ask me what chance she has of being restored to health, I must tell you that she has no chance at all.'

Dr. Schott here embarked upon a lengthy and dispassionate medical harangue with which there is no necessity to afflict the reader. Bickenbach, who was terribly afflicted by it, was informed, in conclusion, that it had been delivered to her merely for her guidance, and was instructed to refrain from breathing a word of it to the Countess. Consumptive patients, she was told, very seldom realise their condition and ought always to be kept in the dark: while there is life there is hope; and when hope flies away life speedily follows. What can be done, and what should be done,

for those who are under sentence of death is to gratify their whims and submit to their petulance. In that way their brief journey towards the cemetery may be made easy for them.

All this was inexpressibly painful to the poor old Baroness, and was perhaps also painful to her companion, although he had the advantage of her in being a philosopher and in having kept watch for many years o'er man's mortality. But irremediable situations must perforce be acquiesced in, and Bickenbach contrived to play the part assigned to her with less effort than she could have believed possible. After a day or two she took comfort from the thought that actual danger was probably remote. Dr. Schott himself had said that the Countess's life might be indefinitely prolonged; the main thing was to neglect no precaution and to take extra care of one who was not much given to taking care of herself. If only it were permissible to make a second appeal to Mr. Colborne, whose cold Britannic pride and displeasure would surely be overcome by an intimation of his wife's state of health! But Dr. Schott, when this course was timidly suggested to him, made a grimace and declined to associate himself with any such perilous enterprise.

'A diseased lung,' said he, 'cannot be healed in that way. Besides, she is no longer in love with the Englishman. You would only enrage her by sending for him, and it is not good for her to be enraged.'

The Doctor's judgment may have been at fault. His patient would, no doubt, have been enraged by a proposal that her husband should once more be summoned from England; but whether she would have been enraged by his appearance in obedience to a summons, and whether, if she had been, her health would have suffered through rage of that kind, is less certain. Meanwhile, she was far from suspecting that sentence of death had been passed upon her by a competent physician, and she continued to amuse herself tolerably well until a spell of wet weather set in, which caused her to issue marching-orders with her customary abruptness.

She had no particular reason for removing herself and her retinue to the high Alps, except that Dr. Schott strongly opposed the plan. Indeed, it is scarcely at Chamouni or Zermatt that sunshine can be looked for while rain is falling in torrents over the whole of central Europe, and wet summer snow is perhaps even more dismal than summer rain. The Countess had a bad time of

it, both mentally and physically, during her sojourn in chilly, draughty hotels, crammed with grumbling tourists. The food was bad; she could not, for love or money, obtain half the number of rooms that she required; she insisted upon walking out to see what chance there was of the clouds clearing away sufficiently to enable her to effect her escape, and, as a matter of course, she caught a bad cold. Then it was that for the first time she became seriously alarmed about herself. There are symptoms of which nobody can mistake the significance; she noted that Dr. Schott, whom she had always looked upon as a persistent croaker, affected to make light of these, and one day she asked him suddenly whether she was going to die. He responded with a loud laugh, declaring that everybody was going to die, but that very few people died of a cold in the head. 'He wouldn't have said that a year ago,' reflected the Countess; 'he would have said that, unless I did this, that, or the other, I should be practically guilty of suicide.'

The thought of approaching dissolution affects different people in different ways; and, curiously enough, those who confidently look forward to an eternity of bliss are often more terrified by it than those who, like the Countess Radna, are unable to discern any future on the other side of the grave. Yet to all it must needs come as a sort of revelation, changing the general aspect of the world and its inhabitants, reducing trifles to their true proportions, magnifying what may hitherto have seemed to be trifles, and exhibiting in a strange, clear light the utter insignificance of one poor, solitary human creature amongst the millions who for a time jostle one another upon the surface of this globe. The Countess was not frightened, though she was saddened and a little startled. She had never coveted long life; she had always recognised the fact that, for one constituted as she was, the loss of youth must needs imply a living death; she had said over and over again that she hoped to die young; she was not happy, nor did she expect that any number of coming years could bring her happiness. Still she had probably retained some unconscious, undefined hope which she was now forced to relinquish; for tears of self-pity filled her eyes when she lay awake at night and mused upon her doom. She said nothing to the Doctor or to Bickenbach, perceiving that they had entered into a compact to deceive her for her own good; but they did not deceive her: now that she possessed the clue to their conduct, they betrayed themselves a

dozen times a day; moreover, she knew by her own sensations that her race was nearly run. What, then, awaited her? It was impossible to say, and she was oddly devoid of curiosity upon the subject. The myth of Christianity, which she had rejected, might prove, after all, to have been no myth, but sober truth. In that event, she would surely not be condemned to everlasting and purposeless torments because of her inability to believe in dogmas incredible to human reason. She had no great sins upon her conscience, if she had not the memory of many righteous deeds upon which to plume herself; she had tried to help her neighbours; she had been generous to her dependents; she had injured no man—unless, indeed, her husband might take it into his head to consider that he had been injured by her. Annihilation seemed more likely; and she hardly knew why she shrank from the notion of being wiped out of conscious existence at once and for ever. Perhaps it was because she could not forget that dead baby who had preceded her and whom she had never ceased to mourn.

When at length the rain and the snow ceased, and when she was pronounced fit to travel again, she descended from the mountains to the Italian lakes. Dr. Schott recommended Bellaggio, and she did not think it worth while to gainsay him. She had, in truth, grown singularly amiable and amenable all of a sudden; for her loneliness had been brought home to her, and she felt an eager and pathetic longing to be loved by the paid companions whose hands must close her eyes when all was over. Companionship which was not paid for, and which was destined to arouse her for a time from her melancholy self-communings, was, however, at hand. She had not altogether forgotten her young friend Frank Innes; but it was certainly not with him that her thoughts were occupied as she sat upon the terrace in front of the hotel, one fine, warm evening after dinner, gazing at the darkening lake and the little boats with which its smooth surface was dotted. So that she was as much surprised as she was pleased when Frank's voice exclaimed, close to her ear:

'To think that I should meet you, of all people, in this beautiful, stagnant, intolerable place! What a rare stroke of luck!'

'I am far more likely to be met with in beautiful, stagnant places than you are,' returned the Countess, holding out her hand and smiling at him; 'I have an eye for beauty, and I don't much mind stagnation in these days. But you ought to be in England, shooting some kind of bird or beast, ought you not?'

Frank dragged an iron chair across the gravel, seated himself upon it, and explained succinctly how it had come about that he was wasting his time upon the shores of the Lake of Como. He had, it appeared, visited Dresden, Leipzig, and Munich, only to find that professors of music and vocalists were absent on their annual holiday; he was now on his way to Milan, where he had been assured that he would meet with more skilled instructors than Germany could boast of; only there was no great hurry about it, because the Milanese schools also were said to be closed for the present. He was, therefore, endeavouring to enjoy a period of enforced idleness, and his efforts, so far, had been rewarded by no sort of success.

‘As you very truly say,’ he remarked, ‘one ought to be shooting, or at least playing cricket or something, when one hasn’t any work to do, and pulling about on this beastly old lake in a boat almost as heavy as an ordinary barge is rather poor fun. But, thank goodness, you’re here, and now we can have a good long talk.’

He had already been talking for some little time, and had informed her of his professional ambition, in which she was much interested. He had not mentioned Douglas Colborne, nor had he noticed any alteration in her appearance. Indeed, he had casually remarked, with that careless optimism which belongs to youth and health, that she was looking ‘uncommonly fit.’

She knew that he was only blind because he had not taken the trouble to see; she knew that he had abstained from speaking of his cousin simply because he had not chanced to think of that absent offender; yet human nature is weak, and she could not help being pleased with him both on account of what he had said and what he had left unsaid. Besides, she was really feeling stronger and better than usual that evening.

‘Take me out for half an hour in one of the boats that you call barges,’ she said, rising abruptly. ‘I have been ill, I must tell you, and I am not supposed to be out after sunset; but my doctor has fallen asleep over his pipe, and I have given my duenna the slip, and I have a fancy to go out on the water before they come to drive me indoors. You won’t find me an enormous addition to the weight of the boat.’

Frank assented without hesitation or compunction. ‘I expect your doctor is a donkey, like most doctors,’ said he. ‘As if it could possibly hurt anyone to be out of doors on such an evening

as this ! Come along, and we'll drift quietly across to Cadenabbia and back. I've half a hundred things to tell you yet.'

A few minutes later the Countess was comfortably esconced in the stern of the smallest boat that could be discovered, while Frank, bending over the sculls which he was lazily manipulating, confided to her willing ear one out of the fifty communications which he had professed to have on hand. The odd forty-nine (if indeed there were so many) were all of them connected with that one, and he dwelt upon it at such extreme length as to leave himself little time for entering upon subsidiary details.

The Countess heard him out patiently and sympathetically. Not being in love with Lady Florence Carey, she did not, of course, derive any special gratification from listening to exaggerated rhapsodies upon the subject of that young lady's personal charms ; but she adored a good old-fashioned romance, and she perceived how easily Frank's romance might be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in the good old-fashioned way by the intervention of a benevolent outsider. She did not, however, propose at once to make him happy by means of a long cheque and her blessing. Love-matches, as she had sad reason to know, are not unfrequently repented of, and it might be well, before taking decisive steps, to ascertain the earnestness and the fidelity of this interesting couple.

'Have you spoken to my—to Mr. Colborne about all this?' she asked at length.

'Oh, yes, I've spoken to him ; I thought I was bound to do so. But he doesn't approve and he doesn't understand. For one thing, I don't think he is quite clear about a professional singer being a gentleman, and he was dead against my giving up my Government clerkship. Then again, he is convinced that Lord and Lady Burcote will never allow their daughter to marry me, and he doubts whether either she or I will remain constant for several years. In short, he takes the common-sense view, you know.'

'He would be sure to do that ; it is so difficult for a respectable, mediocre Englishman to distinguish between common sense and uncommon nonsense. In reality it is you who are sensible and he who is a fool ; because what we are all struggling after is happiness in some shape or form, and if you would be happier as a public singer and the husband of your Lady Florence than as a bachelor and the head clerk in a Government office, you are quite right to struggle for what you want.'

‘That’s just what I say!’ cried Frank. ‘I knew you would see things as I do.’

‘Yes; you are right to struggle for what you want, but it doesn’t follow that you will get it. If you don’t, you must console yourself with the thought that you have done your best, and perhaps, after a time, you may have the further consolation of reflecting that it might not, after all, have been worth getting. I confess that your present scheme doesn’t sound to me hopeful; we must try to hit upon something more practical and practicable. I will think it over in the night—I have plenty of time for thinking during the night now—and you must come and see me between twelve and one o’clock to-morrow, when I shall have finished breakfast. Now you can take me back, if you will. It isn’t exactly cold; but it is rather chilly, don’t you think so?’

Frank thought it was very hot and stuffy; but he noticed that his companion was shivering; he noticed, too, that she had a bad cough and that there was something rather odd and changed about her voice. He hastened to comply with her request, and, as he took leave of her upon the landing-steps, where she was received by Dr. Schott, promised to keep his appointment punctually on the morrow.

The German physician, to whom he had not been introduced, glanced over his shoulder to growl out: ‘An appointment at a reasonable hour, I trust, sir! The Countess Radna is under my care, and I will answer for nothing if she is exposed to the night dews again as she has been this evening.’

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE COUNTESS DEALS WITH THE SITUATION.

THE Countess had spoken only too truly when she told Frank that she always had plenty of time for meditation during the night; but on that particular night her sleepless hours seemed a little less interminable than usual to her, because she had something and somebody besides herself to think about. Amongst those who knew her best she passed for being a somewhat selfish woman; but it was a good deal more her misfortune than her fault that she had so behaved as to earn that character. People who are really selfish are invariably good-natured; they make the best of things;

they take all they can get; they neither ask nor wish for impossibilities. The people who cause trouble and inconvenience are those who, like the Countess Radna, love their neighbours (or shall we say one or two of their neighbours?) better than themselves, and must needs receive daily assurances that their abnormal affection is reciprocated. The Countess had, as we know, been cruelly disappointed in her husband; she had, furthermore, met with little but disappointment in all the attempts that she had ever made to better the condition of the fellow-beings with whom she had been brought into contact; yet she was not so soured by these repeated failures but that she still ardently desired to perform some kindly and useful act before she died; and thus it was that Frank Innes, with his rather commonplace romance, came to her as a godsend.

Commonplace though his romance might be, there were complications connected with it which rendered it at once interesting and perplexing. As far as money was concerned, it had to be borne in mind that Lord Galashiels was too rich a man to be simply and vulgarly outbidden, while there was no very obvious way in which Frank could be helped, save that of pouring money into his hands. Nevertheless, a more excellent way had suggested itself, before the morning, to Frank's wakeful ally. She knew very well what she would do in his place, and she saw no reason why, if he were worth his salt, he should not be equally audacious. In these days there are many impediments, legal and other, to a runaway marriage; yet—given certain conditions—they are not wholly insuperable, and the Countess thought she had it in her power to overrule the scruples which both Frank and Lady Florence would probably feel. Anyhow, that was Frank's only chance. '*Les absents ont toujours tort*,' reflected the Countess. 'He ought never to have left England, and, though she may have told him to go, it is most likely that he took his orders far too literally. She must be very different from other girls if she has no misgivings about him now that he is out of sight.'

Any lingering misgivings that the Countess may have entertained as to the wisdom of her own proposed course of action were removed when the early post came in, bringing her, oddly enough, a letter from an English correspondent which contained an important item of news about Lady Florence Carey.

'I have just heard,' wrote this lady, 'that the Burcotes have at last succeeded in engaging their only unmarried daughter to Lord

Galashiels. I don't know whether you met him when you were in London. He isn't fascinating, and Heaven alone can tell who his grandfather was ; but he has wealth enough to set the Burcotes upon their legs again ten times over ; so I suppose they ought to be congratulated. Especially as, by all accounts, there has been a good deal of trouble in securing him. One is rather sorry for the poor girl, who kicked vigorously, they say ; but then Lady Burcote's daughters should not be so silly as to kick. By the way, the engagement hasn't been publicly announced yet, and I promised not to mention it ; but there can't be any harm in my telling *you*, since you are not likely to be within hundreds of miles of any of us yet awhile, I am afraid.'

Hence it resulted that, when Frank turned up to pay his respects at the appointed hour, he was greeted by a lady who, holding an open sheet of note-paper in one hand and tapping it with the forefinger of the other, said : ' This will teach you to take young women *au pied de la lettre* in future ! I foresaw, while you were relating your pretty story to me last night, what would happen, and now it has happened. You had better take your ticket for London at once.'

' I don't understand what you are talking about,' answered Frank wonderingly. ' What has happened ?'

' Oh, nothing at all extraordinary. Only it seems that Lady Burcote and Lord Galashiels have profited by your retirement, and that, if you don't make haste to prevent it, there will soon be a wedding in the family.'

She then proceeded to read aloud the extract which has been quoted, whereat Frank turned rather white.

' I'm not acquainted with your friend,' he remarked ; ' but, if you'll excuse me for using simple language, I shouldn't wonder if she was telling a lie. Not an intentional one, I dare say ; only, you know, some ladies *are* given to spreading about mere rumours as positive facts.'

' And a great many of them are intentional liars into the bargain. This one may be an intentional liar, and you are not bound to believe her ; still I wouldn't be too incredulous if I were you, because what she says has all the appearance of truth. In any case, you will make no mistake by going back to England and finding out the truth for yourself.'

' I don't see what good that would do,' returned Frank gloomily. ' Either it is a fact that Florry has engaged herself to

that brute, or it isn't. If she hasn't thrown me over, I shall have had my journey for nothing, and if she has—well, then there will be nothing more to be said.'

'Oh, how English you are, with your solemn assumption that there is no such thing in the world as intricacy! Haven't you really intelligence enough to understand that she may have engaged herself to the brute without having thrown you over? Nobody ever yet won a battle by retreating; but plenty of victories have been gained by a rash advance. Now I will tell you in a few words what to do. You return home; you contrive a meeting with Lady Florence—as you seem to have done that once, I suppose you can do it again—you find that she is betrothed to your rival—yes; you must be prepared for that discovery, and you must endeavour to swallow down your reproaches. Well, then you persuade her to make her escape and marry you. You telegraph to me; I receive her in my house in Paris, so that there will be no disregard of propriety; and in a week or a fortnight—I do not know exactly how long a delay the law requires—your marriage takes place. As for the expense, I charge myself with that.'

Frank could not help laughing, though he did not feel particularly merry. The Countess's scheme was delightful; only it laboured under the disadvantage of being, for many reasons, hopelessly impracticable. He mentioned two of these reasons, which seemed to him to be conclusive.

'Even if she could manage to escape from her father's house,' said he—'and I don't believe she could or would—she would infallibly be traced to Paris and followed within a week. Moreover, I couldn't ask her to marry me upon my present income; it isn't large enough. In two years, or perhaps even in a year, it may be; but it isn't large enough now.'

'Oh, if you are going to wait until there are no difficulties to be surmounted, you will wait all your life. The difficulty about her placing herself under my protection is easily solved: as soon as I hear from you that you have obtained her consent, I will write and ask her to stay with me. Lady Burcote, who, you may be sure, is already beginning to think of wedding-presents, is not likely to object. She knows that I am rich and extravagant, and she would be sorry to deprive her daughter of a possible *parure* of diamonds. My riches and my extravagance enable me to snap my fingers at your second difficulty also. Hear me out, please,' she continued, as Frank opened his lips to interrupt her; 'I do not

offer you a fortune. In the first place, you would not accept it; secondly, I could not give you as much as would place you on an equal footing with Lord Galashiels; thirdly and lastly, one would like to make sure that Lady Florence is willing to face a little hardship for your sake. But if she has the courage and sincerity that she ought to have, and if she doesn't mind entrusting you with her future—why, then I think I may claim the privileges of relationship so far as to promise that you shall not starve.'

It was not without some demur and a good deal of feeble argument that Frank yielded to the above representations; but a man of his temperament was certain to yield to them in the long run, and indeed he could not see that there would be much harm in accepting temporary assistance from one who was so very well able to furnish it.

'The only thing is,' said he, after he had practically assented to all the concessions demanded of him, 'that I don't feel as if I had a right to ask all you tell me to ask. It's a strongish measure, you see, for a girl to contract a clandestine marriage and break with her people.'

'Of course it is,' returned the Countess; 'but you ask far more of her when you ask her to refuse all offers until she is of age, upon the chance of your loving her as much then as you do now and having more money then than you have now.'

'Ah, that's what Douglas said.'

'I have no doubt he did. He ought to know, if anybody does, that a man's love is a transient emotion.'

Frank remembered all of a sudden that he had a mission to accomplish, for the carrying out of which the present occasion seemed to be propitious. 'Douglas isn't at all that sort of fellow,' he declared. 'I don't know what is wrong between you, and I can't think that either of you can be to blame; but I'll answer for it that whatever he may be, he isn't fickle. He's as steady as a rock, and——'

'And as unimpressionable. Impressions may be made even upon the surface of rocks, though, by a continual drip, and I suppose the steady persistency of Miss Rowley has at last met with the reward that steady persistency deserves. Far be it from me to grudge her her triumph!'

'Peggy Rowley!' exclaimed Frank; 'you don't mean to say that you suspect her of laying siege to your husband's heart! What can have put such an idea as that into your head? Why

Douglas and she have been friends ever since they were children ! More by token, they aren't quite as good friends at the present moment as they once were. The last time I saw Douglas I wanted him to go and look her up, and he wouldn't, because she hadn't asked him. She seemed to have put his back up somehow or other.'

'If having put his back up means that she has contrived to affront him, I congratulate her,' observed the Countess, smiling. 'One doesn't quarrel with a friend about nothing ; but it is always a good plan to quarrel a little with a lover.'

'Is that why you quarrelled with him ?'

'I didn't quarrel with him ; we parted in order to avoid a quarrel—which shows that we couldn't have been lovers any longer. To be perfectly honest, I will own that I was not quite pleased when I first heard that everybody was talking about him and Miss Rowley ; I thought he might have shown better taste—in every way. However, that is of very little consequence now.'

'I don't know what you may have heard or what people may have talked about,' returned Frank ; 'but I'm sure he never gave them any excuse for talking nonsense. Why do you say that it is of no consequence now ?'

'For reasons which will soon be apparent to you, but which I will keep to myself for the present, if you please. Let us return to your affairs.'

'But may I not take any message from you to Douglas ?' persisted Frank. 'I shall have to tell him that I have met you, you know.'

'I have no message to send him, thank you,' answered the Countess. 'Unless, perhaps, he would care to hear that a sort of message which was despatched to him, some time ago, by my companion the Baroness von Bickenbach was despatched without my knowledge or authority. Yes ; you may tell him that from me, if you like.'

Frank, knowing nothing about the message alluded to, and hastily assuming that it had been of a hostile character, at once promised to do as he was requested. He made his interlocutor laugh by adding an emphatic assurance of his personal belief in Douglas's fidelity.

'I have no doubt,' said she, 'that you think him a most admirable person, and your judgment is not at fault. Taking him as a whole, I have never met with a person quite so admirable—'

or quite so impossible to live with. We will hope that Miss Rowley doesn't agree with me, and we will now (because there is really no time to be lost) map out your plan of campaign distinctly.'

No one, except a singularly quick-witted and unselfish individual, could have guessed from that that she wanted to hear another word about her husband. Frank, whose wits were not abnormally acute, and who was not more unselfish than the general run of anxious lovers, accepted the change of subject without protest. He likewise accepted, in substance, the programme which the Countess rapidly, but lucidly, submitted to his approval. He professed to be very uncertain as to whether it would meet with acceptance or approval when submitted to Lady Florence; but he acknowledged his inability to replace it by any better scheme, and the gratitude which he expressed before saying good-bye was evidently enhanced by an inward hope that he would ere long have something more definite to be grateful for.

Shortly after he had left her, the Countess sent for Dr. Schott, and said: 'I am going to Paris. I know you will abuse me; but I can't help it. One must buy one's winter clothes, and nothing is so certain to make me ill as badly fitting dresses. Now, it is a fact, though you probably will not believe it, that no dress can ever be made to fit unless it has been tried on at least once; so that in reality this journey is going to be undertaken for hygienic purposes. Besides, I caught cold only the other day, and I am sure you must have noticed that it takes everybody a month or six weeks to catch a second cold.'

Contrary to her anticipation, Dr. Schott asserted no right of veto. 'You have a warm house in Paris,' he answered; 'you may stay there until the middle of November, if you choose. It will be time enough for you to move south when the frosts and the fogs set in. I venture to beg, however, that you will order your winter dresses to be made of woollen materials.'

Later in the day he said to Bickenbach, who consulted him anxiously about the proposed move: 'It does not signify; patients may safely be indulged when they are beyond the reach of remedies. Apparently that young Englishman who took her out on the water last night has told her something which has excited her; perhaps it is in order to meet him again that she has decided to make for Paris. So much the better; for she suspects now that she is dangerously ill, and the only service we can render her is to preserve her, by this means or by that, from falling into a state of despondency which will hasten her death.'

CHAPTER XL.

LADY FLORENCE YIELDS TWICE.

THE Careys were commonly spoken of by their intimates as 'a queer lot,' that comprehensive description enabling their intimates to dispense with the labour of analysis. Yet they were not really so very queer, nor so very different from what other people would have been in their place; although it must be owned that some of them had done queer things. What else, indeed, could be looked for from the daughters of their mother? Lady Florence, notwithstanding the mother whom it had pleased Heaven to inflict upon her, had as yet been guilty of no offence much more heinous than that of having once met a young man by stealth in a country churchyard; but it was not improbable that, with the example of her nearest relatives before her, she might eventually be tempted to less excusable conduct, and she was dimly aware of her danger. That was one reason why she wished with all her heart to refuse a man so repugnant to her as Lord Galashiels. It cannot be said that the promise, or half-promise, which Frank Innes had extorted from her was another; because she was persuaded that she never by any possibility could become Frank's wife, and, that being so, she did not see what difference it could make to him whether she espoused Lord Galashiels or somebody else. Meanwhile, her chances of espousing anybody else dwindled daily; for his lordship continued to avail himself of the hospitality which was so willingly extended to him, while it was as certain as anything could be that he did not intend to submit to a second defeat without making a fight for it.

Now, if Lord Galashiels had been equipped for the fray with nothing beyond such strength as he himself possessed, he might have been beaten by a determined antagonist; but what rendered him formidable was that he had an all-powerful ally in the person of Lady Burcote, by whom his attentions and intentions were cordially approved of and seconded. It is altogether irrelevant to assert—as people who are without personal experience of such trials are fond of asserting—that a girl who is worth anything will never allow herself to be driven by a worldly-wise mother into breaking faith with a man whom she loves. The immense majority of us are not worth very much; the immense majority of us have ideals of conduct, more or less lofty, to which we find it

practically impossible to conform, and we really have not the smallest right to condemn a callow maiden whose powers of resistance are limited. Lady Florence believed (and she was not so very far wrong) that her mother was invincible; she knew what had happened in the case of her sisters; she naturally did not like being scolded or punished; and, like all human beings who, by one means or another, have been prevented from exercising their will freely, she had become something of a fatalist. What was to be would be: there was no earthly use in struggling against destiny.

'Florry dear,' said Lady Burcote, after breakfast one morning, 'Lord Galashiels wants to ride over to the kennels. You had better go with him and show him the way.'

The girl made a feeble protest, which she did not expect to be of any avail, and which, when uttered, fulfilled her expectations.

'The bay mare is lame, and there isn't anything else for me to ride,' she said. 'Couldn't Papa go with Lord Galashiels?'

'Your father thinks he is in for another fit of gout, and I am sure he must be right, or he wouldn't be so cross and contradictory. You can take his cob. Now, Florry, I want you to understand that this sort of thing has gone on long enough; it can't go on much longer. Patient as Lord Galashiels is, he won't stand it. I myself have been extraordinarily patient; I have allowed you to fight shy of him and to make excuses for avoiding him all this time because I didn't wish to hurry you. But of course he has noticed it, and of course he isn't best pleased. From what he said just now I gathered that he meant to repeat his offer to you this morning—and an uncommonly lucky girl you are to get such a chance twice, I can tell you!'

'How astonishing men are!' exclaimed Lady Florence. 'He knows that I hate him, because I have as good as told him so. Why can't he look out for some girl who doesn't hate him? There must be lots of them about.'

'Any number,' agreed Lady Burcote dryly; 'but for the present he prefers you to them all. There is nothing astonishing in that; on the contrary, it is quite usual for men to covet what is denied to them, and, as things have turned out, I am not sorry that you began by refusing him. He is inclined to be so uppish that a snub is good for him. All the same, it is possible to go too far; you must not refuse him again.'

'I hate him!' repeated Lady Florence disconsolately.

Her mother glanced at her and returned, 'Don't talk nonsense, please.'

It was not much to say; but Lady Burcote's glance spoke volumes, and the girl went away to put on her habit with a thorough comprehension of what disobedience would entail upon her. Many men and almost all women can face physical pain; but there are certain methods of daily torture from which any method of escape that may present itself must, in common justice and pity, be pronounced permissible.

Half an hour later Lady Florence set out with her detested companion, and before they had advanced a mile towards the kennels (which Lord Galashiels had no desire at all to inspect) the anticipated declaration had been made.

'You needn't tell me,' said the red-headed, broad-shouldered young man, with a touch of resentment in his voice, 'that you don't care for me now; you have taken more pains than there was any need for to convince me of that ever since I have been here. But I care so much for you that I don't mind taking my chance and trusting to luck. I can't live without you, Lady Florence; that's the long and the short of it.'

Lady Florence, staring straight between her horse's ears, remarked, 'You aren't proud.'

'Yes, I am; most people would tell you that I'm devilish—I mean tremendously proud. I'm not at all the sort of fellow to turn the left cheek to anybody who has given me a slap on the right; don't you believe it! But I'd turn both of them to *you*, and if you'd kiss me on the one, God knows you might hit me as hard as you liked on the other!'

Lord Galashiels was rather pleased with this little speech, which surprised him by its appropriate neatness and which slipped off his tongue without any previous preparation. He added, after a momentary pause: 'You *have* hit me pretty hard, as you know; and the proof of how hard I've been hit is that here I am, kicking my heels day after day, instead of being on the moors.'

'Oh, how I wish you would go to the moors!' exclaimed Lady Florence fervently. 'Why don't you?'

'I will as soon as you have promised to be my wife; that's all I'm waiting for. I suppose you think I'm a fool; but I am not. I understand all about it; I know you would never promise anything of the kind if you were free to consult your own inclinations; but the fact of the matter is that you aren't free, and if you refuse to

marry me, it will only end in your being made to marry some other man whom you love as little. Well, as I say, I'm willing to take my chance; and why shouldn't you consent to take yours? If there's nothing else to be said in my favour, it's something that my eyes are quite open to the truth, and that I don't ask you to pretend an affection for me which you don't feel. Very likely the other fellow, whoever he may be, won't be so accommodating.'

It would have been impossible to urge an unwelcome suit in more persuasive terms. Lady Florence hesitated for a few seconds and then said: 'If I consented, would you promise upon your honour to leave for Scotland to-morrow?'

'Yes; I'll agree to that condition.'

'And it's understood that I don't love you a bit, and never shall?'

'It's understood that you don't love me at the present moment; what may come in the future is another affair.'

'No; don't make any mistake about it. If you are kind to me, I shall like you perhaps; but I shall never love you. That is really the truth, and of course I would rather, for choice, marry a man whose eyes were open to it than one who might accuse me afterwards of having humbugged him. Only it does seem very odd that you should still wish to marry me, after what I have told you.'

Lord Galashiels endeavoured to explain why it wasn't odd. He was not successful, having little facility for putting his ideas into convincing language; but he managed to persuade Lady Florence that the average husband is a far more objectionable person than he was likely to prove, and that, after all, was sufficient for his purpose.

Upon the whole, he behaved wonderfully well. On their return home, the betrothal was announced to Lord and Lady Burcote, who sealed it with their benediction, or at least with a modern equivalent thereto; but he ventured upon no familiarities, beyond that of once kissing his *fiancé's* hand, and he honourably fulfilled the terms of his compact by departing for the Highlands on the following morning. The wedding, it was arranged, was to be solemnised in November or December: meanwhile, the bride-elect was 'not to be bothered.' The phrase was her own, and no objection was taken to it. Lady Burcote made it a rule never to bother people who were sensible enough to do as they were told; so for the next week or ten days her daughter had an easy and pleasant time

of it. The time, that is to say, would have been easy and pleasant for Lady Florence if it had not slipped away with such alarming rapidity and if she could have forgiven herself for her treachery to Frank Innes. But this was what, contrary to her anticipation, she found impossible of accomplishment. She loved him; she had told him that she loved him; he would not and could not make any allowances for her; henceforth he would undoubtedly despise her as a traitress. These were simple facts from which there was no escape, and they were present with her by day and by night. Sometimes she thought that, if she could see him once more and lay two or three other simple facts before him, she would be a shade less miserable. 'But perhaps,' she reflected, 'it is just as well that he is abroad. He will have got over his indignation and fallen in and out of love half a dozen times, most likely, before we meet again—if we ever do meet again. All men are like that.'

This precocious judgment upon masculine nature at large, which was the fruit of hearsay rather than of experience, received the refutation that it merited when Lady Florence, walking homewards, one afternoon, after a solitary country ramble, was accosted by a tall, spare, grey-bearded individual, who touched his hat and said:

'Excuse me stoppin' of you, my lady; but I've just been up to see his lordship's gardener about some o' them new chrysanths, as is turnin' out uncommon poor, I'm sorry to find, and I understood from him as I might meet you, if I was to go back this way.'

'Oh, is that you, Chervil?' said Lady Florence, with a sudden flicker of hope, which as suddenly died away under a conviction of its absurdity. 'I haven't had time to look up old Eliza lately. She is all right, I hope?'

'Right she is, my lady,' answered Peter, 'bein', in a manner o' speakin', beyond reach of earthly misfortuns. Which I wish I could say as much for some as lives in mansions, 'stead of almshouses.'

Peter drew a note from his breast-pocket, held it up between his finger and thumb, cleared his voice, and proceeded: 'This here billy, my lady, which Mr. Innes, as arrived at Stoke Leighton from the Continent yesterday, quite unexpected, and comin' up for to see me this mornin'—for he's a gentleman as do take a deal o' interest in gardenin', you see, my lady—and owin' to me havin' mentioned casual as I might have to step across to his lordship's in the course o' the day——'

'Give it to me,' interrupted Lady Florence, snatching the envelope out of Peter's hand and thus relieving him from further struggles with a sentence which had escaped his control. 'I suppose you were to take back an answer, weren't you?'

'As your ladyship pleases,' answered Peter, slightly shocked by what struck him as an unseemly disregard for conventionality. His own delicacy had forbidden him to hint that he had undertaken a long tramp across country with no other object than that of surreptitiously delivering Frank's missive; but Lady Florence, who had been brought up in a school which has at least the merit of scorning useless pretence, did not trouble herself to dissemble anything except her agitation. Having torn open the envelope and run her eye rapidly over the few lines which it contained, she said:

'You may tell him that I will be there to-morrow at the same time as before. It will do no good; but I don't suppose it will do much harm either.'

Peter touched his hat and departed, without another word. He was a man of strict integrity, and he did not like to be involved in underhand dealings; but, like many other men of strict integrity, he knew how to make terms with his conscience by ignoring what he was about. He had been asked to deliver a note, and he had delivered it: its contents were no concern of his.

Lady Florence, for her part, did not always care to obey the voice of conscience; and although it was quite plainly her duty to turn a deaf ear to Frank's impassioned entreaty that she would meet him once more, she had no hesitation in turning her back upon her duty. She wanted to see him; she wanted to have one last opportunity of saying things to him which might or might not have the effect of causing him to think of her without rancour in the time that was coming; and it is not impossible that one or two readers of these pages may be acquainted with the keen satisfaction attendant upon conscious and deliberate peccadillos.

To the leniency of such honest and beloved fellow-sinners the present humble chronicler may safely appeal on behalf of poor Lady Florence, who told her mother a little fib on the morrow and who was permitted to drive over to Stoke Morton in her pony-carriage for the ostensible purpose of visiting her old nurse. She did not visit old Eliza, having neither the time nor the heart to enter into details upon the subject of her approaching marriage, and as soon as she had disposed of her pony and her groom at the

village inn, she walked straight to the churchyard, where Frank was impatiently awaiting her.

'Is it true?' was the first thing that he said, after a greeting over the precise nature of which a modest veil shall be drawn.

'Of course it is true,' she answered. 'I told you, you know, how it would be. It is horrible and disgusting and disgraceful and all the rest of it; but it isn't my fault, and—and it doesn't very much matter. If the truth were known, I expect it matters ever so much more to me than it does to you. Don't scold me; that's all I beg of you! If you think I deserve to be punished, I can assure you that I am going to be punished—and pretty severely too! Whatever happens, I shall never love anyone but you: that's what I came here to say.'

'And that's the only thing that I wanted you to say,' Frank declared. 'I did rather hope that you would have had the strength of mind to hold out against Galashiels and your mother; but I dare say I'm no judge of how hard it is to resist the kind of pressure that has been brought to bear upon you, and I certainly don't want you to be punished in the way that you are thinking of. You aren't going to marry Galashiels, let me tell you.'

'Oh, yes; indeed I am!' returned Lady Florence, shaking her head mournfully; 'everything is quite settled.'

'Settlements be bothered! Handsome as his may be, I don't believe they'll tempt you, and I don't believe you are any more afraid of poverty than I am. Come and sit down on this old tombstone while I give an account of myself and of the plot that the Countess Radna and I have been hatching between us. The Countess has been a rare good friend to me, and she wants to be a good friend to you too. At least, I hope you'll think so.'

Lady Florence, when the Countess's audacious project had been revealed to her, did think so, and, as for poverty, she protested airily that that had no terrors for her. She did not, in fact, know what poverty was, whereas she knew very well what love was and guessed also what it would mean to be united for life to a man whom she loathed.

'But I can't bring myself to imagine,' she sighed, 'that such an event could ever come off. It is too wild and improbable! Mamma would be sure to find out all about it; she always does find out all about everything. Besides, what should I do if she simply said that she didn't wish me to accept the Countess Radna's invitation?'

‘It will be time enough to think about that when she has said so; but she won’t say so,’ answered Frank confidently. ‘It was only your consent that was essential, and you’ve given your consent now, Heaven be praised! I’ll telegraph to Paris this afternoon, and she’ll write to Lady Burcote at once. Would you mind if I were to stand on my head for one little moment?’

‘Yes, I should mind very much; there’s nothing to stand on your head about; don’t be idiotic!’ returned Lady Florence. ‘Ever so many things have to be considered yet. You are staying with your cousin, I suppose. Doesn’t he suspect what has brought you back to England in such a hurry?’

‘Now, look here,’ said Frank; ‘all you have to do is to go to Paris when you are asked: that doesn’t commit you to anything, does it? Leave the rest to me, and you’ll see how smoothly it will go. I have no doubt Douglas suspects why I have come back—indeed, I’m sure he does—but he won’t interfere; he isn’t the sort of chap to interfere with things that don’t concern him. Moreover, when I take leave of him, he won’t ask me where I am going, and I shan’t volunteer the information that I am bound for the Avenue Friedland.’

Lady Florence had a good many more objections to urge; but none of them were seriously entertained, or even very seriously put forward. It was agreed that she should let Frank know, either through the post or through Peter Chervil, whether her trip to Paris had been sanctioned or not; and, although the conspirators remained in close conversation until it was high time for one of them to be wending her way homewards, the working out of their conspiracy was not the subject which chiefly engrossed them. For that reason, it will be divined that the remarks which they interchanged before they parted were hardly of a nature to merit repetition.

(To be continued.)



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MAY 1898.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLVII.

BROWN WILLY.

ESTHER fastened two ends of the blanket—a thin one—round her neck, wearing it as a mantle, tucked another end under one arm where she carried the loaf, and started, a reaping hook in her right hand, bound by the handle to a long stick, on her way north-west.

She passed the stream that flows into the Trewortha marsh from the west, and climbed the round hill above it, in the midst of which is an outcrop of sparry granite that bears a fanciful resemblance to a grey mare, and which accordingly bears this name. Esther had arranged with her grandparents that food and sundry articles she might need were to be left for her at intervals among the rocks of the Grey Mare; then she went over a long down sparsely strewn with granite, much skinned accordingly for turf, and away to where, like a white ribbon, the great Bodmin road, the main line of communication in former days between London and Falmouth, crossed hill and dipped into dale in the undulating surface of the moor between the main groups of mountainous outcrops of granite. Here were a few farms clustered about the road, with their inclosures taken from the waste built round with the stones cleared from the ground within.

To the north, in the gathering gloom, but with some of the western halo from the set sun reflected over their barren crests, rose ridge on ridge against the dark north-eastern sky. Already,

under the granite-crowned Garrah, a star shone forth, where in a solitary farm a lamp had been kindled.

Esther crossed the Bodmin road without encountering anyone, and plunged into the wilderness beyond, a wilderness not to be trodden and threaded by daylight by such as are inexperienced and unacquainted with the country, on account of the wide expanses of unfathomed bog occupying old lake basins.

Esther was well aware of the danger, but she knew her direction, knew that the moon was near full and would shortly rise over the ridge to the east; and she was also well acquainted with the position of the dangerous morasses, and of the points where the streams could be crossed, none deep so near their cradle.

Like a dark purpose in a sullen, tortuous mind, the river Fowey wormed its way through the mops. Never seen, hardly heard in its whispering falls, it could not be gathered where it worked and turned, and dived and fretted. Esther kept to the heights, now traversing whole villages of ancient circular huts, some within pounds and fortifications, some outside, at what date tenanted none knew. Now and then she startled a couched moor colt or a heifer, or a frightened curlew with a whirr and scream rose from under her feet. Then she made Tolborough, with its cairn crowning the summit, a chambered cairn with a passage leading into its depths, where dwelt the pixies.

She passed without fear, the Good People had never hurt her. She belonged to them; they would protect her when taking refuge in their domain, their last refuge from the encroaching plough and the sound of church bells. Here she turned and looked back. Darkness had gathered behind her as a misty sable sea flowing in between all the mountain tops to the east, pouring down into the bottoms and filling them with gloom, whilst, silvery and ghostlike, their granite heads still caught the light. But out of this dark shadow she saw Dozmare like a large eye looking up at the night heavens, waiting to see the moon sail above it and to reflect it in its waveless surface; Dozmare, the sole remaining lake of the cluster that once occupied the basins in this upland region. On again, now warily picking her way among the rocks of Coddah and down into the great basin below Brown Willy, where springs rise and the 'old men' had burrowed after tin, and bogs have swelled and overflowed and occupied the ancient works.

A horrible death-like odour rose from the bogs, an odour as of an overcrowded graveyard; and graveyards these vast bogs are, that

have swallowed and contain in their abysses the bones of departed races of beasts that once ranged the moors, and relics of ancient peoples who worked there, and who have disappeared like the elk and urochs, the wolf and hyæna.

Before Esther against the northern sky stood the black mass of the highest of the Cornish ridges, like a mighty wave rolling in on her to submerge her in the trough below. She seated herself on a stone and waited. She dared not go forward into that same trough till light came. As she sat, she was as one in a lost untenanted world. Not a sound of any living being, of a bird, or insect was audible. The outline of the mountain before her was undefined—whether on account of gathering vapour from the Atlantic or in night shadows she could not tell. And now, sitting there in the chill air, in absolute solitude, she begins in her undisciplined mind to ask herself why she was there.

Why, indeed, had she run away, and was hiding, when she had done no harm to anyone?

She had acted on impulse, the first impulse of a warm heart. Few there were who had been kind to her, but among those few was Theresa Curgenven. She had wits enough to know that what Theresa had done might bring her to a shameful death, a death that would heap disgrace on the family to which belonged Justinian and Alice, the only persons she loved outside her grandparents' hovel. But that was not all. She, and she alone, had seen Physis shot. And although with her lack of moral education she had no scruples about speaking and even swearing to what was not the truth, she was afraid lest if brought to cross-examination by 'them lawyer chaps,' the truth might be extorted from her.

The idea of taking the crime on herself had sprung up unprompted in her rude mind as the readiest way of relieving Theresa. She was confident that she could elude pursuit on her native moors. A regiment of soldiers could not catch her—she had a thousand lurking places. She knew that not a moor farmer or his men would 'turn cat-in-the-pan' on her, in other words, betray her whereabouts, should they guess or come to know it, not only because they would dread the vengeance of her grandmother, but because they regarded her as belonging to themselves, the moor-folk, in contradistinction to the lowland people. And, as she sat musing, she laughed merrily and beat her hands together. There was sport in leading the police a wild goose chase, in drawing them off on a false scent. She had not, as a child, played

games with the school children ; now, on the confines of womanhood, she would play such a May-game as was unsurpassed and unsurpassable ; and so, with this game, take farewell of childhood. She had laughed aloud. There was no echo, not the smallest reverberation, her voice went forth into and was lost in space.

But now there was a brightening in the eastern sky, and first a spark, then a flame, then a globe of fire rose above the moors, and a flood of light was poured over the flank of Brown Willy. Not over its five heads, for the crest had, in fact, arrested fog from the Atlantic that blew over it, blew between the points of its comb, arched over the great trough below, which was suffused with silver moonlight, and the vapour above was itself turned into light like the silken streamers of the cotton grass in the marsh.

With a shout of exultation, Esther sprang to her feet, and the full moon flashed from her reaping hook, turning it into a silver crescent.

Down the slope of Coddah Esther went, her feet bounding on the wet turf ; she saw the flash of water in Fowey well, a pool where the river bearing that name is supposed to rise. She almost ran down, for she was chilled with sitting in the cold night air and falling dew, and having reached the bottom crossed it, and began to climb the side of Brown Willy. As she ascended, the silvery streamers of fog were dispersed, and the five-horned head of the mountain stood out illuminated by the moon, turned into silver against the night sky. A steep scramble, and then at length, now glowing in every limb, the girl stood on the summit of the most eastern point. Here rises an immense cairn above some ancient Cornish king. Here the dead man lies with a golden goblet in his hand, and he turns his cup from side to side. When he is thirsty, he turns the bowl to the west, and thereupon the wind blows from the ocean and brings up rain that pours through the chinks of his grave and fills the cup. The dead man holds it till full, and then drinks. If his tongue be slaked, he turns the bowl downward and the wind shifts, the clouds disperse, and the sun shines. But he has his thirsty fits full often, and when they are on him the rain falls incessantly, and the fire that consumes him seems unquenchable.

‘To-night,’ laughed Esther, ‘the ou’d king hev took but a dewdrop in his cup and gone to sleep again.’ Then she descended the further side of the crest, and found what she had come to find, her place of shelter—a house ready built, but untenanted since

the times of the old king of the golden cup, who lay immediately overhead.

This house is a beehive hut composed completely of granite blocks nestling in among the natural rocks, like a swallow's habitation; so like the natural rocks in colour and appearance, that probably ninety-nine persons out of a hundred might pass within a stone's throw of it without observing it. It is completely circular, six feet in diameter within, the walls are perfect, and stand above the paved floor but three feet; and then the roof is drawn together in overlapping courses, except where one huge slab has been thrust over a portion. The little doorway is to this day intact. The house could be entered on hands and knees alone, between granite jambs under a granite lintel. Attached to it is a still smaller beehive hut, that served anciently as store chamber. The hut was indeed the mere skeleton, divested of its original covering of turf that excluded wet and cold, but such as it was Esther was constrained to make it her habitation for the rest of the night.

She had been walking for some hours, and was hungry and tired. She broke off a piece of the loaf she carried and ate it for her supper, then, having wrapped herself up in the blanket, she laid herself in the dryest recess of the hut and was soon asleep.

When morning broke she was shivering with cold. A hasty breakfast was made on her loaf, and then she set to work upon her house to make it rain and wind tight. This was not difficult. She cut up turf and stopped all the chinks between the stones; she cleared out all the peat and mould that had accumulated through some two thousand years on the floor; she reaped heather and strewed it on the pavement to form a bed, and then proceeded to weave rushes for a mat that she could hang over the entrance at night. Upon the roof she heaped turves that she found at the places where the peat cutters had stacked their stores to dry, and had neglected or cast aside as indifferent slabs. The day was thus spent, occupying all her energies and intelligence in the reduction of the size of the loaf.

A fire she dared not kindle, had she possessed the means of lighting one. She was living at the highest point in all Cornwall, at a point commanding two seas. Far away to the south was Plymouth Sound, and gleaming like an arm of fire in the declining sun; to the west was the estuary of the Camel, Padstow Bay. A light at such an elevation would be seen far and wide, and must

attract attention. Only in rain and mist could she venture to kindle one; but, so far, rain and mist had happily not come upon her.

The day was over, and in her beehive hut in the darkness sat Esther, plaiting the rushes to complete her screen. The wind piped and fluttered about the entrance. A soft silvery-grey light was discernible at her narrow doorway. She sang to herself snatches of old ballads her grandmother had taught her; then laid her plaiting down in her lap, unable to proceed in the darkness, and listened to the play of the wind and to the tumble and roar of her own stormy pulses, and think as best she could the thoughts that flashed in her dark mind. They came one on another; now a thought of her grandparents, then of Justinian, next of how she was giving the police the slip, then of the murdered man, and not in order but in a whirl, and dancing over and flashing through them, fancies of the king with his golden cup; of Tregeagle, the giant, who churned Dozmare with his staff till it foamed like a cauldron; of the pixies dancing round the cairn on Tolborough.

Then, suddenly, she was startled by a scream, loud and piercing in her ear, and a flutter near her feet.

She shrank against the stone at her back, drawing her feet under her in terror, and holding her breath.

Glimmering in the dark were a pair of eyes, now flashing, then disappearing like a revolving light at sea.

The moon rose, and a flood of pure light poured in at her doorway, and in that light she saw what had alarmed her, a snowy owl, white in itself, dazzling white in the moonbeam.

It had come to warn her to depart from a haunt it called its own.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ESTHER'S ADVOCATES.

PERCIVAL CURGENVEN, as both magistrate and employer of the deceased Mr. Physic, considered himself bound to take active measures to have the case of the murder cleared up, and the murderess brought to justice. Not that his activity was productive of result. He ran about talking, drove into Liskeard to consult a lawyer, discuss the matter with the superintendent of the police, dine at the ordinary at Webb's Hotel, and make the murder the

subject of discussion at table; and after having laid strict injunctions on the servants and on Justinian not to mention the matter before his wife, lest it should excite and harm her, was himself the first to transgress, and blurt the whole matter out before her.

There had been a coroner's inquest, and, under the circumstances, with such evidence as was produced before the jury, the verdict was one of murder against Esther Morideg. But then, in this case, as in that of Captain Lambert, and ten thousand others, all the evidence necessary for the direction of coroner and jury into a right finding was not produced.

Justinian was in the smoking room of the Bungalow engaged in trying to get into working order a piece of Captain Lambert's mechanism, a tumbler made to go through numerous and varied evolutions by the fall of sand into buckets of different sizes, rendering the revolutions more or less irregular, and thus changing the attitudes of the tumbler. The toy had been neglected and had got out of order. He had removed the back of the box that contained the mechanism and was studying the contrivance, when a tap at the window pane called off his attention, and he saw the sweet face of Alice looking in at him. He started up, and ran out to her, but met her in the doorway coming in.

'Alice, I have found out the secret of the little man who pirouettes,' said Justinian. 'See—this is how your father managed it. Was it not clever?'

'Oh, never mind that,' said the girl. 'I am so anxious and unhappy about Esther Morideg. I suppose you know that the coroner has given out that she shot Mr. Physic, and I am quite sure it is not true.'

'I *know* it is not true,' said Justinian.

'So do I, but why is all this hue and cry after her when she is innocent?'

'Because they will have it that she shot him. How do you know, Alice, that she is innocent?'

'I am sure of it. She couldn't do it. She is as good-hearted a girl as ever was found; wild and uneducated of course, but that does not make her wicked. She is not wicked. Justin, I am positive she never did it, because she could not do it.'

'I don't think your reasons convincing.'

'But I know her.'

'So do I. I don't believe she could do it, though the provocation was great.'

'I am quite positive she did not.'

'My reasons are better than yours, Alice. I know she is innocent for reasons that do carry conviction with them. You see, men and women have different sorts of intellects. You say she is innocent because you like her and think her a nice sort of a girl; I say so, because I have evidence that exculpates her. That is the difference in sex.'

'What are your reasons?'

'Why, this—I know that the pistol was in its place when I came here for my gun. Look, Alice, there is the rack. There is my gun, and there is the governor's, and do you see that gap below? There is where the pistol was. You know we were at Sir Sampson's. My stepmother had a fit, or something of the sort, and a servant was sent to recall the governor and me. We came back, and I took the gov.'s gun and put that, as well as mine, here on the rack, and I am positive the pistol was in place. Then, as my stepmother was better, and wished us to go back to the Tregonticks, I came here for the guns again, and the pistol was still in its place. I remember noticing then that it had a cap on, but as the hammer was down, I couldn't say whether it was an old one or not, I was in too great a hurry to examine at the time. Those owls of police have got the pistol now, and so you see there is a gap in the rack. Well, when I came here for the guns, don't you think I should have at once noticed had the pistol been away? I don't know what girls are, whether they are observant or not, but all I can say is that men see these things at once with half an eye. The pistol was in place. I noticed the copper of the cap under the hammer, and determined I'd row the keeper about it, for he ought to have had the pistol cleaned. I could swear to it. And yet these fools have it that Esther carried it off a day or two ago, after having frightened John Thomas with a threat that she would pepper his fat calves with it. It's rubbish!'

'But—Justin! why have you not said this? Why did you not let the coroner and the jury know this?'

'I wasn't going to appear before a pack of idiots unless specially sent for. Why, Alice, who do you think they had for jury? There was Tonkin, the fellow who has that little omnium gatherum shop, boots and lollipops, groceries and drapery. There was Hicks, who is only a day labourer, and so deaf that he misunderstands everything said to him, and Uglow the butcher. Do you think I, the young squire, was going to come before a parcel of bumpkins

and give evidence? Not I. If there should be a trial, and a respectable jury of educated and intelligent men, I'll go and say my say, but I'm not the man to cast pearls before swine.'

'Oh, Justin! you have done very wrong. Poor Esther is in trouble and danger, and all through you.'

'Not a bit. They are such a pack of stupids, that I knew they would bring in their verdict in defiance of my evidence, if I gave it; and I was not going to submit to that—I, the young squire, indeed! Besides, who is the coroner? He's only old Grimston, who is a second-class lawyer, and the son of an auctioneer, and married the daughter of the cake shop. When there's a proper judge and respectable jury, then I'll say my say.'

'And in the meantime poor Esther is to be hunted and perhaps thrown into prison.'

'Oh! you let Esther take care of herself. What does she care about what old Grimston, and Uglow, and Hicks, and that lot decide concerning her? I wouldn't care a snap myself. Let them say I shot Physic. I should laugh in their faces. Why, Hicks is as stupid as he is deaf. Who cares for their opinion except their wives?'

'But your father thinks Esther is guilty.'

'Yes—it is unfortunate. He is rather—well, he is swayed too much by general opinion, which is what I despise. Indeed, I may say I am convinced that when general opinion sets one way, truth is to be found in the opposite direction.'

'Did you not tell your father about the pistol?'

'Yes, but he did not listen, or give what I said its proper weight. You see unfortunately I am only his son, and a father, I suppose, is always inclined to undervalue a son's opinion and intellect, and so on. Besides, he is rather obstinate, though I say it, and he has made up his mind that Esther killed Physic, and he will stick to his opinion as a matter of principle, just because he has formed his opinion. It is a misfortune when people do not listen to reason, but, after all, they are the sufferers.'

'Not in this case, Justin. It is poor Esther who is the sufferer. What is to be done about her?'

'I don't know.'

'But the truth cannot be arrived at till she is found.'

'Then let them find her.'

'No—do not let her be caught by the police and carried to

gaol, and lie in prison, regarded as a murderess, till the assizes. It would kill her to be confined within stone walls.'

'There is something in that. And that is why she has given them the slip.'

'Yes, but where is she? I wish she could be seen and spoken with, then we would find out something about this. Now everyone says she murdered Mr. Physic, and I don't believe it, and never shall be brought to believe it.'

'Nor will I,' said Justinian.

'Then it is our duty to stand by her, and help her to clear herself. Justin! she is a poor uneducated creature, and quite unable to establish her own innocence. Everyone is against her except you and myself, and you and I must be her advocates, and do what we can to clear her.'

'I should enjoy doing it,' said Justinian, 'if only for the sake of letting the world know that our opinion is worth attending to. And it would teach the governor a salutary lesson, too.'

'Then do something to establish Esther's innocence.'

'What? I am game so soon as the proper authorities are prepared to listen to my evidence.'

'That is not sufficient. You must find Esther out; learn where she is, see her, and get her to tell you what she knows. There is some mystery. It may be she is trying to screen her grandfather. I cannot account for her playing hide-and-seek in any other way. If not that, then something has happened to her.'

'I will do what you wish. If she is in concealment, her grandparents will know. Leave it to me to worm the truth out of them. I understand all that sort of thing better than those blundering owls of police. Of course the Moridegs would tell them nothing—*me*—that's altogether different.'

'Thank you very much, Justin. I am so troubled at heart about the poor girl. I do like her. There is a great deal more in that girl than most people imagine.'

'I'll go directly. Nothing like knocking off a thing at once.'

'Do so—and tell her—tell her, Justin, that nothing will make me believe she did this dreadful thing intentionally. Mamma does not know her as I do.'

Justinian started for Trewortha. He did not ride his cob because the way was very bad, so rough with stones in places, and so boggy in others, that it would have taken him longer to reach the place on horseback than on foot.

As he approached the throat of the valley where the Trewortha Tor throws out its feet against those of Newel Tor on the other side of the stream, he saw the policeman lounging about, as though he had nothing to engage him.

Justin accorded him a supercilious nod and was rushing past, when the constable said, 'Excuse me, sir, but may I ask where you are going?'

'Where I am going?' repeated Justinian haughtily; 'what the deuce is that to you? Do you know who I am? I call this cheek, I do. As if I might not be where I chose. I suppose these moors do not belong to you, Mr. Tregaskis, but are free to anyone to cross?'

'Oh, certainly, sir. Only I was——'

'Only you were wholly unwarranted in asking such a question of me. I take it as impertinence.'

Then Justinian walked on, switching at the heads of fern and gorse, at anything on which he could vent his disgust.

Presently he turned his head over his shoulder and looked back. The constable was following at a distance. He clenched his teeth, stood and hacked at a thistle with his stick till he had hacked it to the ground, looked back, and saw the policeman still coming on.

Then he strode to meet him, and said haughtily, 'Are there not other ways than this to Trewortha? What do you want there? or—may I flatter myself that you are following my traces?'

'I beg pardon, Mr. Justinian; I had no wish to offend, but I have my duty to discharge.'

'Well, and what is that?'

'Why, I have to catch that party, sir—beg pardon—Esther Morideg.'

'Then, why do you not catch her?'

'She is hiding from us.'

'If hiding, why do you come to Trewortha? You are not likely to find her there. Of all owlshness that ever was, there is nothing like that of the rural police!'

The constable was nettled.

'Well, sir, you may say that if you choose. I know very well she is not at Trewortha; but seeing as you was akeeping company with her——'

'What!' Justinian's face became scarlet.

'No offence, sir; I suppose it's no secret. All the country knows that you've been keeping company with Esther, and walking out with her.'

'And so——'

'And so I thought you might perhaps know where she be. And, sir, let me tell you, if you do, it would be better to tell me. No offence, but seeing you coming this way, and thinking you might know, or come to know, where she is, I thought I might take on me to give your honour a caution that it would be a serious matter to assist in any way to conceal her or get her off. It would make you, sir, an accessory.'

'I think this an insufferable piece of impertinence,' said Justinian indignantly. 'To talk of me—of *my* keeping company—and then as an accessory. I'll tell you what it is, Tregaskis; I'll speak to my father, who is a justice of peace, and get your name struck off. It is intolerable to have police so insolent. Turn your nose in another direction, please, and do not dog my footsteps.'

'I must do my duty, sir.'

Justinian swung himself about and proceeded on his way, panting with anger, his brow suffused with colour from shame and indignation. He wished heartily now he had never met with, never condescended to be gracious to a common girl such as Esther. 'Vulgar people will make their vulgar comments; they imagine what does not exist.' He had half a mind now not to proceed, but he had made a promise or given an assurance to Alice that he would see the Moridegs, and so he must go forward.

In no good humour he approached their hovel, and almost ran against Esther coming to it from an opposite direction.

At the same moment that he saw her, so did the constable, who gave a shrill call on his whistle, and began to run. Instantly there started up three more constables from behind rocks and the mounds that marked the sites of prehistoric habitations, and ran also, concentrating on the hut of the Moridegs.

Esther saw that she must be captured if she remained, and she turned. She looked first at one, then at another, of those running towards her before she resolved on her course, and then bounded down the slope and darted out on the marsh.

CHAPTER XLIX

ACROSS THE MARSH.

TREWORTH Marsh is probably unique anywhere. Being an old lake-bed silted up with the wash from the granite tors that surround it on every side, all which granite tors are more or less impregnated with tin, the bed of the lake is to a large extent a settlement of the metal. The ruins of villages of all ages from prehistoric antiquity, which cover the slopes of the hills that dip into the morass, are those of mining peoples of different races and languages, who at different times have sought to recover the sunken treasure.

They have waited till the water was low that they might turn up the bed of the lake ; they have toiled at the granite barrier to saw through it and let the water off ; they have dammed the streams back that flowed into it ; but the lake-bed has never yet been thoroughly explored—never had more than its shoals turned over. Here and there is, as it were, an island in the wide expanse where the water was so shallow that it could be dyked out, and the rubble explored for tin till the metal it yielded was exhausted, or till the dykes gave way, and the water overflowed again and covered all save the heaps of discarded refuse thrown up by the diggers.

But it was not tin alone that Trewortha marsh offered to explorers : it yielded gold as well, though not in large quantities ; and a squire whose land stretched up to it in the seventeenth century boasted of the heavy gold rings that he had obtained from the precious ore recovered from the marsh, and gave to his daughters.

The fact of the lake morass having been searched over wherever practicable by man has made its surface most unequal. Here, a little above the level, rises a grey tract of crumbled granite that has been turned over and thrown up. There, again, are depths which the miners at one time by great effort kept dry, and searched till they were abandoned to the dark peat-water again. Here are tracts of quaking swamps that seem fathomless, over which a tripping foot may pass on the green moss, but which will engulf anyone who stands still for a minute. There are courses of dark water too wide to be overleaped and too deep to be waded through.

Into this morass many an ox has run and sunk and disappeared. It is said that men who have ventured to attempt to cross it have perished in like manner. Treacherous, deceptive, a maze to whoever enters it, in one place alone can the moorman pass over it who is aware of its intricacies and acquainted with the secret of the track.

The keen, observant eye of Esther had seen that her sole chance of escape lay in traversing the marsh. A policeman had sprung from behind a rock on the further side of the stream that flowed into the basin, and would pursue her if she attempted the moor on that side. Another had appeared in the direction of the Grey Mare, to intercept her should she endeavour to return by the way she had come; and to run up the stream was not to be thought of, not only because Constable Tregaskis was coming down it, but also because it led in the direction of cultivated and inhabited land. She must return to the depths of the wilderness, and her only way of returning to it was over the surface of the marsh in whose abysses lay the city Tresillan. Happily, she knew the track.

Many a Sunday had she stepped from hummock to hummock of rushes and from spit of rubble to islet of gravel till she had reached that spot in the marsh where, far down, lay the church of Tresillan, whose bells could be heard tolling for service in the dark peat-water; and often had the fancy taken her that she heard the sunken bells.

Esther did not run out far on the marsh before, in full confidence of her security, she turned, folded her arms, and looked at her pursuers.

Three of the constables were making for the morass, from the several places where they had been when they first saw her. Esther laughed. She knew that they could not reach her. Tregaskis was coming after her, following exactly her course. She was not afraid of him. She could throw him out. Then her eye went in search of Justinian, and she saw him running, not towards the marsh, but along its bank, leaping the divisions that marked the old boundaries of paddocks and fields and pounds of the ancient settlers, making in the direction of the Grey Mare. Esther had been obliged to come to the habitation of her grandparents because she had exhausted her provision of food. She had gone, as appointed by her, to the Grey Mare, and had found nothing there. The reason was that the old Moridegs knew that they were

watched; they were well aware that if either of them went to the granite mass called the Grey Mare, he or she would be followed, and the deposit of bread there would be found, and that then an ambush would be laid for Esther. After consultation together they deemed it advisable not to carry anything to the Grey Mare. If Esther discovered nothing there, she would know that they were precluded from visiting the spot, and would make an attempt to obtain food elsewhere. At any rate, it would be a notice to her that her grandparents were prevented from following the arrangement made. Esther had understood this. But food she must have. She might, she knew, venture into some farmhouse or cottage on the moor and beg there; but though the elder inmates might not betray her, yet there was risk from the chatter of the children. She therefore preferred to run the risk of going to her grandfather's habitation, trusting in her own agility and knowledge of the marsh for escape should she be pursued. Unhappily, she had been observed before she had time to obtain from her grandparents what she so much needed.

Esther waited on a heap of 'streamer's' refuse till she saw that Tregaskis was within a stone's throw of her, and then, with a taunt cast back at him, she started again. Light and elastic, her foot not resting for more than a throb of the pulse on the yellow-green surface of moss, she passed over a tract of quaking bog. To reach it she had leaped; for a bog of this description has its margin so fine and filmy as to be incapable of sustaining the weight, whereas a little further on it is dense as velvet-pile. Across this Esther literally danced. She turned her head for a moment over her shoulder, and in that moment saw the constable disappear. He had attempted to follow her on the quaking bog, and had gone in. He sank at once to the armpits, and only saved himself from going under altogether by throwing out his arms and clutching at the moss.

Being in, to extricate himself was not possible. He must shout to his fellows to bring poles to lay across from the more solid ground upon the bog, by which he might clamber out.

Another of the constables was running in bewildered fashion up and down a tongue of rushy land that was a peninsula, with a wide reach of unfathomable bog-water on every side of it save that by which he had come out upon it. Advance was impossible. A third had come to the conclusion that he could not thread the

mazes of the swamp, and was endeavouring to return to the mainland, but could not find how to retrace his steps.

Meanwhile the old Moridegs—Roger, with pipe in mouth and hands thrust into his pockets, and Tamsin, with a scarlet kerchief tied round her throat, were standing outside their hovel, watching the proceeding with a stolidity that seemed indifference. Esther saw by a movement of her grandmother's arm that she desired to catch her attention. She stood still, and detected that she pointed hastily to the Grey Mare.

No sooner did Esther perceive this, than she bent her steps in a different direction, so as to deceive her pursuers as to where she purposed leaving the marsh.

As she went on, she disturbed many wild fowl that had made of this region their home and breeding-place. In 1680, an old squire who lived at Trebartha Hall, the nearest residence of a gentleman, composed a poem on the charms of his place, and did not forget to celebrate the virtues of the great marsh :

To fine fowling he that is a lover
Of that delightful sport
Let him streight here resort.
He cannot miss of duck, cock, tail [teal], and plover,
Widgeon, nor wild goose, hearn [heron], and snite [snipe],
Nor dove, nor thrush, nor hatterflight [jacksnipe],
Heathpoult, nor partridge, nay, nor pheasant.
If this don't please, I know not what is pleasant.

In one place Esther came across the horns of an ox protruding from the bog. The brute had got in, and had sunk, holding up its head with the nostrils above the inclosing peat, till that had covered them, then it had suffocated, but had not sunk further, and the white horns still gleamed out of the grey moss that formed a film over the treacherous surface. Toads, water-voles, leaped into the ooze as she disturbed them, or wild duck whirled away.

At length Esther came upon an islet of rubble on which were cairns and mounds, marking temporary habitations of searchers for gold or tin, who had remained on the spot instead of returning nightly to the mainland through the dangerous swamp. From this place she could see that the constables had recovered Tregaskis from his dangerous position, and were making towards that point on the margin where they conjectured Esther would leave the morass for the bank.

She made her way on in the same course as before, till she came within a bowshot of the margin, when she turned sharply

round, retraced her steps over the morass, and sped as fast as she could towards the north, took the one ford over the stream that wormed its way through Trewortha, and reached a long arm of firm land that ran into the morass, and was crowned by two barrows, under which lay some of the dead who had once toiled for gold or tin in the marsh. This arm was so slightly raised above the water, that to such as did not know the contour of the land it was overlooked, yet, having reached it, an immense advantage was gained by Esther, as she was able to run along on it as fast as her feet could carry her, without any impediment to stay her. By this means she reached easily the main bank of moorland, whereas her pursuers were left a mile in the rear, and moreover to reach her had to make a difficult circuit.

Relaxing her speed, she now ascended the down, among the tufts of whortle, and whin, and heather, at her leisure, till she reached the Grey Mare, where she found Justinian, who had made for it in a direct line, at the recommendation of Roger Morideg. He was lying with his back against the rock, and was behind it.

'Look here, Esther,' said he, 'I have brought you a loaf your grandfather gave me. He told me to come to this point. I don't half like it, though. You see, my father is a magistrate, and it looks ugly for me to connive at your escape. Of course I don't believe you have murdered old Physic, and what is more, Alice has commissioned me to tell you that she believes you are innocent. All the same, I don't like to seem to favour your escape from the police.'

'Her says I never killed 'n?' Esther tossed her head.

'Yes,' said Justinian. 'My cousin, Miss Alice Curgenven'—he had before said 'Alice,' and regretted it; he now gave her her proper title—'my cousin, Miss Alice, has enjoined me to assure you that nothing will ever make her believe that you committed the crime. I myself——'

'You don't think me that wicked, do y'?'

'No, I do not. I know very well that there is a mistake somewhere, but where, I am at present unprepared to say.'

'So'—Esther was pleased, and smiled—'so you and Miss Alice sez Esther bain't so bad as folks say.'

'Exactly. Only we do not understand your conduct in running away.'

'And she—what does she say?'

'Whom do you mean by *she*?'

'Why, sure—who but your stepmother?'

'I don't think she has said anything about it. She has been, and is still, very unwell. She has not been out of her room for some days.'

'Look y' here,' said Esther, laying hold of Justinian by the arm, and speaking with vehemence. 'You mind and say to her just what I tells to you. You go to her and say: "Esther—her'll die game and never speak." Do y' understand now?'

'I don't understand. I don't see how I can. I will say this to her, but I'd like to know what concern it is to her. What have you to do with Mrs. Curgenven?'

'Ay—she loves me.'

'Does she? That's news. Now, Esther, I can't stay here. See—the men, those police fellows are concentrating on this spot. In a quarter of an hour they will be on you, and I particularly do not wish to have been observed in conversation with you. I have already had to undergo insolence and annoyance. Esther—tell me. How came this affair about? Unless you know something about it and had some hand in it or other—though, as I said, I entirely disbelieve in you having done it—why are you in hiding from the police?'

'I do know about it, and I don't want to say naught.'

'Did your grandfather shoot Physic?'

'You heard,' answered Esther, turning sullen, 'I ain't a going to say nothing about it. I've took it on myself, and that's enough.'

'Do you mean to tell me you have taken the charge of murder on yourself to screen another?'

Esther moved from foot to foot impatiently and uneasily.

'I won't say nothing. There now. If I gets snared in everything I sez, mere talking wi' you, how'd it be if lawyer fellers were to set on me and worrit me? They'd have it all out in ten minutes.'

'In ten minutes you'll be in the hands of the police, and then the lawyers, if you will, will be on you.'

'Them perlice!' laughed Esther. 'They'll never touch me. Look. I'll climb up a' top o' the Grey Mare. I'll stand there, and let 'em all see me, and come runnin' on up hill and try to ketch me, and just to the last I'll give 'em the slip.'

'But I do not wish to be seen, myself.'

'They sha'n't see you neither.'

'How will you manage that?'

'Wait and see.' She ascended the rock, and standing against the grey sky waved her hands and shouted defiantly. Justinian, who was concealed behind the rock, looked out cautiously, and saw that a couple of men were approaching. He was greatly annoyed, alarmed, and incensed; the girl had shown herself, and he must infallibly be seen either where he was, or running away as soon as she fled. She might run faster than her pursuers, but he himself would be recognised, and might get into trouble for having been with her without making an attempt to detain her.

'It's coming!' shouted Esther, looking down on him.

'Confounded bother it is. I wish I'd never concerned myself to bring you the loaf.'

He could hear the call of Tregaskis to Esther to stand and give herself up.

In another moment—suddenly—he, Esther, the rock were wrapped in a moor fog, dense as a pall of cotton wool. Esther sprang off the Grey Mare and came to him.

'There,' said she, 'I told you so. The pisgies—the Good Folk 'd never let them take me. I seed 'n coming. I seed 'n first come ower Brown Willy, then her came along Hendra, and I were sure nigh to a minute when her'd be on us. Now come along wi' me. I'll take you away to where you can get your road home, and I can be off to my place o' hiding. You may walk now bowld as i' the streets of Liskeard, and no one 'll never see you, if they was five paces off.' Esther laughed. 'Do they think to take me on the moor? They'll never do it. They canna' do it.'

She walked on with Justinian a little way through the mist, and then stood still.

'Gran'fer cannot come to the Grey Mare wi' bread for me, and I must ha' some'ut to eat. Whativer is to be done? I'll get along with this you've given me a bit. After that I must ha' more, and where is it to be brought to? They're watching gran'fer and gran'mother I reckon. Oh, dear! what shall I do? Now so—I'll tell y' where it is. If I'm wanted, go to the top o' Brown Willy. I trust you—I'll trust no other. If I'm to live—I must have bread; if I gets none—why I reckon I shall starve. But you don't forget what I said. Tell her—I'll die game and say naught.'

She bounded away and was lost in the mist. Justinian found himself by a granite post that he recognised and by a track the direction of which he knew,

CHAPTER L.

A CONFIDENCE.

JUSTINIAN entered Theresa's room, and going over to the fireplace stood with his back to it. She was sitting some way from the hearth, near the middle of the apartment, in her arm-chair, listless, doing nothing. She wore a dark blue velvet loose dress, with lace frills about the throat and sleeves. Her face was almost as white as the lace, and her eyes as dark as the velvet.

The boy had not seen much of her during the last few days, and he had sufficient observation to note, and sufficient feeling to be startled, at the change in her. The face was thinner, the features sharper, the hue more deathly. All energy and brightness were gone out of her. Percival was by nature sanguine, and he either did not notice what was clear to the boy, or he considered it as of no real import. Not that he did not love his wife, he loved her so much that he would not allow that she was seriously ill. Love takes one form or other, of exaggerating or of minimising, the danger of the person loved.

Anxiety was wearing out Theresa, as well as actual sickness, or rather the anxiety induced sickness, and then enfeebled her, so that she was unable to shake it off.

She had hoped, when she consented to be Percival's wife, that the struggle for existence was terminated, and that for the remainder of her days she might be able to bask in the sense of security and in assured comforts. No more holding of the door against the wolf that sought to break in, with a knowledge that the slightest relaxation of muscle, abatement of tension of effort, would leave her a prey of the ravening monster. No more struggle against failing powers and the weariness of exhausted endeavour; no more occupation of debatable land with sword and bow, without camp behind on which to fall back. Such had been her expectation when she married. And she had been disappointed in her anticipation. Her position she had acquired was menaced, was precarious, and she had been forced to make an attempt to secure it which had led to a terrible casualty, from the consequences of which she was not safe.

The thoughts of what she had done, vain repinings that she had not acted otherwise, dread of the catastrophe when the truth

was known, uncertainty how to meet it, all wore her, almost paralysed her. It was not that she cared much what happened to herself. Life had lost all its charms for her. When she was married and came to Curgenven, life had burst into flower, and the future gleamed before her full of tranquil, sunny blessedness. A blight had fallen on her hope. Her only solicitude was for Percival and the family into which she had been taken up. He had been kind to her, he had done what he could for her, he had been a helper out of her distress; and she could not endure the thought that by her means disgrace and trouble should fall on his loved head. She thought and thought, but could see no way out of her embarrassment, no gleam of light on her darkness.

'Stepmother,' said Justinian, 'whom do you suppose I have seen and chatted with?'

She looked up at him, patiently, without inquiry in her eyes or on her lips.

'And I am the bearer to you of a most unintelligible message.'

'To me?' she spoke, without tone of interest in her voice.

'Yes; I have actually had a few words with Esther Morideg.'

A sudden flush rose to Theresa's cheeks, and her hands trembled as she laid them on the arms of her chair and raised herself from her supine position.

'Yes, stepmother, I have. It ought not to have been. There is a warrant out against her, and the police are chivying her like a hare. I dare say it was all wrong. I ought to have stopped and held her till the constables came up; but I'm not the sort of fellow to care to play amateur bobby, so I didn't do it. I was not born to be a policeman, nor have the inclination to become one. The blue-bottles are paid to do their work, let them do it. I don't care what the law may be, I won't stoop to that sort of mean work. The fact was, Alice sent me to the Moridegs to see if I could learn where Esther was, so as to convey a message to her. Alice is a chivalrous little Don Quixote of the feminine gender, and will not believe that Esther is guilty.'

'No, she is not guilty.'

'I know she is not,' pursued Justinian. 'I have evidence that she is innocent, for I saw the pistol in its place when I went for my gun. And I'm glad to hear that you take the same view as Alice and me. I wish the governor did, but he is too impetuous in jumping at conclusions to arrive at right ones. Well, stepmother, I found that the Moridegs were closely watched, and that they were

unable to take food to Esther at the place appointed, and so she came herself after it. Then that impudent monkey Tregaskis and some other fellows gave her chase, and I let them run, I knew Esther could distance them, and old Roger begged me take the loaf for Esther to the Grey Mare, and I did so. I did not exactly want to speak with her. As she is under suspicion, and a warrant out against her, I did not like to seem to help in getting her away, and help of course I did when I took her bread ; but then, on the other hand, I couldn't be such a cad as to refuse. Well, Esther threw all those fellows out who were in pursuit and came to the Grey Mare, and I gave her the loaf. I had promised Alice, if possible, to see the girl and give to her Alice's assurance of confidence, and so, of course, having promised, I had to do it. If I made myself amenable to the laws, all I can say is, the laws be blowed.' Justinian straightened his back and looked consequential. 'Then Esther gave me a queer message to you. She said I was to tell you she'd die game and hold her tongue, or something to that effect. But hang me if I can make any sense of it. Why is it she wants you to know that she will not tell ?'

Theresa, who had been listening with quivering attention, sank back in her chair, closed her hand, and in a faint voice answered, 'I cannot say.'

'Of course not,' said Justinian, 'nor anyone' else. But the whole affair is an enigma to me. Why is Esther cutting about on the moors, half starved, and hiding—goodness only knows where—when there is no occasion ? She never shot Physic. He did it himself. His wicked conscience for once spoke ; and I'll tell you what, stepmother, the explanation will come soon enough, as soon as ever his affairs are looked into. It will be discovered that he has been making away with some of the moneys for which he was accountable. I dare be sworn that he has taken handfuls of Curgenven rents and has poured them into his own pocket. The boss never looks into accounts, he takes all on trust. And what Physic has done to my father he has done to others. I should not be surprised if Sir Sampson had frightened him. There was some talk at Cartuthers about Physic and his accounts, and Sir Sampson said he was going to take his affairs out of Physic's hands now that Physic had taken to mining speculations. He advised the governor to do the same. Well, my theory of this business is that old Physic found his iniquities were coming to light, and afraid of conviction and transportation, he took a dose of lead. Why, stepmother, I've

heard the gardener say he saw Physic come this way, and go towards the Bungalow not an hour—hardly above half an hour before he shot himself. That is the explanation. He came here, found no one in, went to the Bungalow, took the pistol, and he had so much gentility in him as not to shoot himself on our grounds, but out on the moor. Mark my words—that is the true story, and all these owls of police, and magistrates, and my father, and everyone else will come round in the end to my opinion. Those fellows never see further than the extremity of their noses. I don't mean the governor—he is led by the rest; I mean Tregaskis and idiots of his calibre—and they are cheeky too.'

'Do you think they will not take Esther?' Theresa half rose in her chair. She had put together her hands, thin white hands they were, she opened them, and then clasped them again to conceal their vibration.

'How can I tell? Not whilst they have such unintelligent fellows as Tregaskis after her. But she cannot go on for ever hiding. The moors don't stretch out into infinity, nor can she go on to eternity without food. How anything is to be conveyed to her, I do not know. Her grandparents dare not venture to convey bread to her, and the Grey Mare is now blown upon. I don't mind telling you that *I* know the whereabouts of her hiding place, but old Roger can't take food there, or all those blue-bottles will be after him like what they are—blue-bottles.'

'She must have something taken to her.'

'I don't see it. If she is innocent, let her surrender. No harm can come of it. It's all moonshine and nonsense. She is frightened, because she is half a savage, and does not want to be locked up for a bit; she is afraid of that, just as any wild bird would be afraid of a cage, and hate the notion of being clapped into one. But, bless you, it's only for a night or two; I could get her out like a shot with the evidence I could produce in the court. If I had had time at the Grey Mare, I'd have told her so.'

'Oh, Justin, do see that she has what she needs.'

'That is all very fine. I'm to carry her crumbs, but I want to know why? If she's innocent, let her come forward and trust to me to get her off.'

'There may be more behind—something she does not wish to say.'

'I don't believe it. What can there be behind? I have told you I know exactly how it all came about. She may possibly have

seen old Physic kill himself, and she, in her ignorance, supposes that this may compromise her—that is all.’

‘She must be helped. She cannot remain in hiding for always.’

‘Let her come out and clear herself, I say.’

Theresa’s heart beat rapidly. She could no longer endure the burden of her secret, no longer bear to have no one whom she could consult, and who might assist her in her difficulties. She dared not confide the truth to her husband. It was from him, above all, that she desired it should be kept concealed. She had tried the rector in a much lighter matter, and he had proved his reluctance to help her. She had no one else to whom she could put out her hand but this boy, who, with his self-assurance, his energy, and his sound heart could serve her in her need. She made an attempt to stand up, but her strength was not equal to the effort.

‘Shall I assist you, stepmother?’

Justinian came to her and took her by both hands, and she rose to her feet. Something of her former vigour revived in her.

‘Justin,’ said she, ‘I must say to you what I could not say to another. I did it!’

‘Did what?’

‘I shot Physic!’

He let go her hands and sprang back with an exclamation of horror.

‘It is true. I did not intend to do it. It was an accident. But for all that—I did it.’

Justinian stared at her, speechless in his dismay.

‘Esther saw what took place, and she has run away, mainly that she may not have to appear in evidence against me. I would not have your dear, dear father know this for worlds. Now you understand what was meant by the message of Esther to me. She is a faithful girl, infinitely grateful for the little kindness I have shown her. I assure you—I do assure you—it was an accident.’

Justinian was still too shocked to speak.

‘I can bear the sense of what I have done no longer without speaking, and I want your help. Esther must be got away. Should she be taken, then I must tell all, and there is something behind I do not wish to tell, something that would greatly affect all your prospects. There is but one hope—that Esther may be got away. Then the matter can remain unexposed. Do not ask for

more information. Let it suffice that I did it, that Esther is screening me, and that for your father's sake, for the sake of the Curgenven family, the real truth must be concealed.'

Justinian had recovered himself by this time; he took a turn up and down the room, then went to the window and looked out. The day had closed in rain, in cloud and rain intermingled, that gave prospect of continuance for some days.

'I see,' said he. 'If you put the matter in my hands I'll manage it. Of course she must be given the means of getting away. Have you any money?'

'Yes—a few pounds.'

'That will do to begin with. I will see her; I must go where she is to be found, and take her something to eat, and I'll manage somehow. I think I might contrive to get her off to the Sandwich Islands. I'll turn it over in my head, don't concern yourself about it. I am glad you did not apply to my father, he'd have lost his head over it at once. The only point to be really considered is which of the Sandwich Islands to send her to. I forget in which the volcano is, of course she must not go to that. She will be in her element there—all savages together. What is the name of the volcano? Kea-Roa?—I forget. I'll ask Alice.'

CHAPTER LI.

CAPTURED.

JUSTINIAN did not go in quest of Esther the day that ensued for two reasons. In the first place, it was a day of incessant heavy rain. In the next, his project of sending the girl to the Sandwich Islands, on riper consideration, did not appear feasible.

The young fellow, after he had recovered the consternation into which he was cast by learning that his stepmother was the actual person who had shot Physic—and this recovery was not a long, protracted affair—was not dissatisfied at having a heavy responsibility laid on him. As he put it to himself, his stepmother had done the wisest thing possible in trusting him with the secret, as no one else in the world was so capable as himself of helping her out of her difficulties.

Dashed at first in his self-assurance at finding that his admirably elaborated explanation of the mystery of the death of

Physic was groundless, he speedily recovered his self-confidence in the gratification of knowing that he alone was in the possession of the facts, and that placed him in a position of superiority to magistrates and police and the public in general.

After having cudgelled his brains as to the best method of disposing of Esther where she might be secure from pursuit, he remembered a boy acquaintance—the son of the parson at Clovelly in North Devon, and he wrote him a characteristic letter:—

‘DEAR BOB,—I want you to do me a favour. There is a girl who can climb, like a goat, anywhere, and I want her to collect birds’ eggs for me at Lundy. You knew I was making a collection four years ago, when you were at the grammar school at Liskeard. Well, Doctor Jenkins, you know, promised me his collection, and he gave it me. There were a lot of awfully jolly sea-birds’ eggs in it. Well, he did a thing of which I don’t approve. Five days after, he took it back, and gave it to another chap—that little sneak Williams, you remember him? I think I behaved like a gentleman in that I did not shake the box and break all the eggs before I gave it up; but then I am a gentleman, you know. The Curgenvens always are that, if nothing else. As to young Williams, he is a cad. He never gave me one of the eggs. For one thing, I would not have taken any had he offered them. The school has gone down awfully since that affair of the eggs. And now I hear it is not thought anything of except by the shoppies, who send their cubs to it. That affair disgusted me rather with egg collecting. But I am going to begin at it again. They are starting a museum at Liskeard, and I fancy it is the thing for us Curgenvens to be the principal benefactors and patrons, so I shall give it my collection of birds’ eggs when I have got one, and for that reason I want a lot from Lundy Isle. I have considered and send you a sort of a wild girl, and I want you to put her across to Lundy Isle, and leave her there as long as she thinks necessary in order to collect birds’ eggs for me. I have a pair of guillemots, but I want more, and they of all sorts. This girl will go anywhere over the cliffs. I shall send her across country. My notion is to drive her part of the way, and then let her work along as best she can. I shall provide her with enough money to pay expenses. Don’t say anything about this to anyone. I particularly want it to be kept secret. I don’t want it to come to the ears of anyone in Liskeard, that they may be thrown off their balance when they

learn as a surprise the munificent benefaction. So, dear Bob, mind and do what I ask you for the sake of old times, and get that girl put across at once to Lundy Isle, and leave her there, birds'-nesting, till I tell you she may be shipped back again.

‘Vale, old chap.’

Justinian despatched this letter, and congratulated himself on having formed so plausible an excuse for sending the girl to Lundy, without having been obliged to state anything that was not strictly true.

The second day was as rainy as that preceding it. The skies were blurred over with formless cloud. The wind was in the south-west. The leaves turned up their lower sides to the wind; rills formed by the side of the gravel walks and washed the gravel away, pools stood on the terrace. A hateful day to be out, thought Justinian; but then, with compunction, he considered how doubly hateful it must be to the poor girl on the moor, crouching in some wretched place of concealment, exposed to the drive of the rain and the rush of the wind. At lunch, when he ate his cutlet and mashed potatoes, and drank his glass of claret, his conscience stung him, that he was pampered whilst she was starving—she had had but one loaf, and that must by this time be consumed.

What should he do? Would he find Esther if he went in quest of her? But was he justified in delaying the execution of his design? Was not this detestable weather the very best for his purpose? Those owls of police, as Justinian said to himself, would never wet their shins on such a day as that, hunting up the unfortunate Esther on the moors, exposed to the worst of the weather. When he had sat for some time brooding in the smoking-room with his father, answering the remarks of the latter shortly, and looking into the fire, he said suddenly: ‘Governor! I don’t fancy you have any idea how ill stepmother is. You take it all ghastly easy, but I believe she is wasting away. Every day she looks worse. I don’t like it at all. That old humbug, the Lis-keard doctor, is not enough; if I were you I’d send to Plymouth. Indeed, I wish you would do it for my sake, for *I* am uneasy about her. She is a different-looking woman altogether from what she was when she first came here.’

‘You don’t mean to say so!’ said Percival Curgenven, starting

up. 'I'll drive into Liskeard and telegraph at once. Why did you not tell me this before?'

'Why, governor, you have eyes as well as I.'

'I'll go at once.'

He rang the bell; and when the servant answered—'Tell George to get the dogcart ready at once. He is to accompany me to Liskeard,' said Percival.

'And,' added Justinian, 'tell James to have my cob put into the cart—also at once.'

'Where are you going, Justin?'

'After birds' eggs—anywhere. I won't stick in any longer on such a day as this.'

'Then come with me.'

'I can't, governor; I want particularly to go somewhere else.'

It was not a gracious speech. He felt it was not, so he altered his tone and said, 'The fact is I have written to Bob Rawley about some eggs, and there's a matter connected with my letter I must attend to.'

'Shall you take James with you?'

'No; I shall go alone.'

'Well, I'll go upstairs and see your stepmother. By Jove, I'd no notion she was so bad. I don't know what I should do were——' His voice trembled, and he ran out of the room to conceal his emotion.

Justinian then got the housekeeper to put together some food, and had difficulty in framing a reason. She brought a small package of sandwiches. That, of course, would not suffice. He must have double, three times the amount. Should she put him up a flask of sherry? Yes; and a loaf of bread and some cheese—cake also. He might want it or might not. Wasn't sure he should come back that night. Anyhow, no harm done if there were too much food—he could chuck it away, or give it to some who needed it. Justinian was accustomed to be open in all he did, and he was clumsy over his excuses. He had much better have made none—simply given his orders and no explanation with them. But this did not occur to him till he had bungled at putting his demands in a plausible form.

Then he wrapped himself in a waterproof and drove away. He had a long journey before him. He must skirt the moors on their western flank, and, when he reached the main artery of traffic

with West Cornwall, either follow it over the Bodmin moors to an inn called the Jamaica Tavern, leave his trap there, and thence strike north over the waste, or else still skirt the moors till he reached the watershed between the Atlantic and the English Channel, put his horse in at a farm, and thence strike west. He was doubtful which course to take, and had not made up his mind when, with steaming cob and himself in a soaked condition, his waterproof notwithstanding, he drew up at a little hostelry called Five Lanes, where he reached the main road, and where the decision must be taken.

To his infinite annoyance, he saw in the doorway the face of the policeman Tregaskis, who, however, at once dived into the kitchen of the tavern, and Justinian trusted that he had not been recognised. 'If he has seen me,' said the young fellow, 'he is too big an ass to draw any conclusions from it.'

He had turned the cob to the door, but now, instead of halting to give it a mouthful of corn, he impatiently whipped the brute, turned away from the inn, and drove down the steep lane leading from the main road to the village of Altarnun. He was moved to take this way, as that in which he was least likely to be observed on leaving the door of the Five Lanes Inn. 'That's how the public money is spent,' growled Justinian. 'That police fellow goes loafing about and looking in wherever there is a pretty girl, and sits and toasts himself by the fire, ogling her and talking soft-sawder. And we have to pay for it all. It is too disgusting! I wish I were a magistrate. I'd make them caper, like the old fellow on hot plates in "Sandford and Merton." But I shall be some day, and then let them look out—that's all.' He lashed the cob as though it were a policeman he were stinging to his duty.

The road was narrow, and was an almost continuous ascent for three miles. The cob must walk, all collar work, no trotting ground.

'If it had not been for that pig Tregaskis, I'd have walked,' grumbled Justinian, 'and done it in half the time. A horse is about the slowest of any living creatures, after a slug, when walking. Why should that fellow have gone to Five Lanes?—and just now. I don't suppose he spends three farthings for the good of the house. Had I put in there, it would have been half-a-crown into Mrs. Bone's pocket. Now she's half-a-crown short, and all along of that bobby.'

Justinian was not in a good humour. The wet had spoiled

whatever amiability had been in him when he started. The waterproof had served to conduct all the rain that fell on his hat and back down to the cushion and had saturated that, so that he was sitting on a sodden sponge. Moreover, he was facing the driving rain, and the driving rain penetrated up his sleeves, and went in under his chin, soaked his shirt, and sopped his collar.

He had resolved what to do. He would take Esther, if he found her, and drive her across country to Bude, see that she was settled in somewhere there, and arrange for her to go on by the coach next day to Clovelly.

If he did that he could not get home the same day, that was not possible. The cob could not stand such a stretch in wet weather.

'It will be disgustingly compromising, hang it! Good gracious! what would the boss say if he heard of it?—or the police? Hang it! I wish I were well out of it, but I can't help myself. I've undertaken the job, and I must go through with it. I'll put up at Trevillian's Gate; there is a farm there, and I know the old chap. He'll give the cob a feed and wipe down, and I'll make Esther walk along the road, and pick her up, so that they won't see us start together in the direction of Bude, which might astonish their minds.'

He arrived at Trevillian's Gate, and got the farmer to attend to the horse. Then he started off over the downs in the direction of Brown Willy. This mountain stood behind another, a bolder ridge—Rough Tor—and this had to be ascended or circumvented before the object of his journey was attained. The farmer was not a little surprised at the young gentleman coming there and starting thence, on such a day, for a moor ramble. He asked a number of questions—wanted to know Justinian's purpose, the point to which he was going, how long he would be away, what were the contents of his package, whether his society as a companion would be acceptable; if not, whether his boy had not better accompany Justinian, to guide him in the event of his being unable to find his way, or, having reached his destination, was unable to find his way back. He entered into minute particulars as to what bogs were to be avoided and what watercourses crossed, and which landmarks observed in the event of Justinian desiring to go in such a direction, and which in the event of his purposing to take another.

Justinian was exasperated and perplexed. He was forced to

decline well-meant offers, and to evade pointed questions. He was detained longer than he liked, as he had some miles to walk and to return, and before him, should he bring Esther with him, was a long drive in the dark through intricate lanes.

He knew his direction pretty well. Rough Tor loomed before him in the rain, wreathed in cloud. He was sufficiently versed in moor wanderings to be aware that he must keep to high ground, and he had shot snipe over the bogs in the bottoms in winter and knew where they lay, and which were dangerous.

'Confound these country bumpkins,' muttered the lad as he went along, 'they are as inquisitive as women. They see so few folk, that the arrival of a visitor is to them as welcome as an orange to a child—both to be sucked dry.'

On reaching the first elevation he looked about him. Through the rain and drifting cloud he distinguished figures, but could not make out whether of cattle or men, at some distance on the moor in his rear. 'I do not remember passing any beasts,' he said. 'I suppose horses—can't keep themselves dry this weather, poor devils, going from place to place in quest of shelter, and finding none.' Hugging his bundle of bread and sandwiches, he ran down the further side of the hill.

After a long and weariful trudge, and none is more weariful than where the feet sink at every step in oozy soil, and the knees are beaten by wet branches of heather, Justinian reached the foot of Brown Willy and began the ascent. The whole of the summit was wrapped in whirling masses of white vapour, cloud driven up from the ocean and caught there. It was like a huge mass of scoria smoking with internal fire, or would have been so had it given off the least heat. Justinian set his face determinately at the hill, and began the steep scramble among hummocks, of furze and turf, through boggy patches where the moisture that condensed on the mountain had broken out and spread over its flanks, scrambled among a chaos of tumbled granite blocks like moraines of glaciers, then over short turf, slippery as glass with the wet. He was speedily enveloped in the cloud, and then could not see many feet before him. He could not, however, miss his way; he had but to climb straight before him till he reached the summit.

'And when I get to the top—the highest point in this howling desolation—what then?' asked Justinian. 'Who is to see me? If I shout, who is to hear me? It will be a confounded nuisance if I have had to come all this way, and been exposed to all this

weather, in a wild goose chase. However, I have undertaken the job, and so must carry it out.'

Up among the crags, in and out among the slippery, fallen stones, stumbling, catching at bushes, panting, hot and cold at once, inhaling fog dense as smoke and smelling of the sea, Justinian toiled on. Now his parcel fell from him, and would have bounded down the mountain side but that it was happily arrested by a cluster of stones a few feet below.

'By Jove! here I am!' exclaimed Justinian. 'Here is old King Cole's mausoleum.' He referred in this flippant manner to the great cairn on the highest horn of Brown Willy.

'Now I am here—what next?'

He seated himself on the cairn. He might have been on a fragment of a ruined world, drifting in space. Above, around, below, was only dense fog sweeping along before the wind, not now condensed into rain, but thick, palpable, obscuring every object within a yard. There might have been no world below. As the vapour drove by, it was as though the cairn itself were swimming, were rushing along, and parting the milky nebulous sea, and leaving it in streamers in its wake. The granite stones of which the great pile was constructed were black with lichen, like reindeer moss, but with white antler-like moss springing up in the interstices. For a moment Justinian thought of the old king in the heart of this cairn, and how he was drawing the water of heaven into his golden cup.

'Here is a pretty go,' said Justinian. 'Up in the clouds and without a prospect of achieving what I came for.'

He had hardly muttered the words before he heard a shout; a strange call, that startled him, and made him spring to his feet and step down the side of the cairn. It was as though the buried Cornish king were calling to him from his sepulchre.

His heart beat a little faster.

'Hang it! what can that have been? Not Esther.'

Again the voice—a hoarse, strange voice; not a mere cry, but a jabber of confused words.

'It's not human; I swear this is uncomfortable,' said Justinian, with contempt for the fears that nevertheless prompted him to leave the cairn. He had not descended below the heap of granite stones before he heard the voice again, this time nearer. It issued from some masses of rock thrown together in confusion below.

He cautiously descended towards this accumulation of stones,

and became aware that there was some sort of arrangement in the blocks.

He approached, not without caution, partly because of the rapid descent of the mountain side and the slippery condition of the turf, but partly also from uncertainty as to who or what was the inmate of this cave, or whatever it might be.

'There's a sort of door—a something over it,' said the young fellow. He stooped to his knee. A door there was of two upright granite jambs, with a lintel of the same material thrown across, not more than two feet six inches above the soil. He put his hand through to draw back what seemed a mat, but let it fall again as a cry like that of a wild beast issued from the chamber into which for a moment he had looked. He was resolved now to search out the mystery, and again he thrust in his arm, held back the curtain, and looked within.

He saw a heap of heather, and on this heap, tossing, a figure. In the light that entered by the opening, he distinguished the white gleaming arms as they were flung about, a face and flashing eyes.

'I'll die game—I wi' n't speak a word—I swear it!'

'Good heavens! Esther! Esther!—is that you? Esther, I say—speak!'

At that moment, out of the mist dashed three men, and ran in upon Justinian.

'Thank you, sir. Thank you kindly for leading us to her. Now we've caught her, that's fine!'

Tregaskis spoke, and with him were two other constables.

'You fool!' said Justinian, angrily, 'do you see?—she is either mad or ill.'

(To be continued.)

THE SCILLIES AND THE SCILLONIANS.

It is perhaps unfortunate for the natives of these isles that by the exigencies of English pronunciation they are in some peril of being bracketed by the ignorant with the inmates of our lunatic asylums. But in fact the islanders might if they pleased revolt upon good grounds against the accepted appellation of their home-land. It is affirmed by experts that in the old time the name was pronounced 'Skilly.' This, though to the novel reader reminiscent of thin gruel, is at least more dignified than 'Silly.' The word is derived from the Cornish 'skoly' or 'skully,' to scatter. This is fairly significative of the hundred or two of black rocks and green islets which form the group, spread as they are over a broad surface of water. But other derivations are also in the field. There is 'sylla,' a conger eel, or 'scylly,' to separate; either of which may be at the bottom of the nomenclature of the interesting little archipelago.

Here, then, is scope for the employment of the county councillors, whose recent institution in the capital of the islands has caused so much suspicion. By getting a stout lever under established custom, the councillors may do wonders, and in a year or two effectually remove the reproach which has hitherto for long lain upon the archipelago. They will also thereby perchance justify themselves and their existence in the regard of their fellow islanders. These view them as a pretext for a new rate merely. The council chamber is over the butchers' stalls in Hugh Town market place. It is a suggestive location. Blood has been ere now spilt for more trivial grievances than this which has taken possession of the minds of the people. But let the councillors accommodate their views and actions to their situation, and all may yet be well. Let them rechristen the islands without delay. If the name must relate to their natural products, would the transition from 'Scilly' to 'Sage' be too abrupt? For in the local gardens I have seen much of that useful herb which is to roast duck what the soul of a man is to his body. The words Daffodil, Narcissus, Mackerel, New Potatoes, or Wreck may also be tendered as substitutes more or less pleasant and appropriate; and all preferable to Scilly.

In truth, however, no error could be more radical than to imagine the Scillonians deficient in wit. We know but little

about them in the olden time; except that the Romans used their isles as a repository for Cornish tin, and perhaps burrowed locally also for the same mineral. But in the last few generations the islanders have shown their abilities as smugglers, rogues, shipbuilders, pilots, and market gardeners in a way that ranges them far beyond the borders of imbecility. One half expects to find them an indolent little community, enjoying their mild climate after the manner of the people of Hawaii. But I had not been a day in St. Mary's ere I had changed my opinion in this matter, and at the end of a week methought a little of their energy might profitably be transferred to some of our mainland towns.

It is, of course, easy to reach the isles. During the early weeks of summer there is a steamer almost daily from Penzance to St. Mary's. This is more for the convenience of the fish trade, and the Billingsgate gentlemen who have it in charge, than for the visitors or the mails. Still, visitors may benefit by it—though at some personal cost. The Atlantic off the Land's End is seldom as smooth as it might be. The perfume of stale fish baskets is decidedly disagreeable. Thus it is advisable for the person who travels to the isles during the mackerel season to take a robust stomach with him; and to be heartily unconscious of bad smells. On these conditions, there is much to enjoy in the little trip of three or four hours. The Cornish coast is viewed panoramically, and for the brief interval during which one is out of sight of land it is as if one were in mid-passage between Liverpool and New York.

Very soon, however, the low rocks of the isles lift their heads above the waves, and in the evening one is set ashore, and a path between sundry fine Himalaya palms and healthy aloes brings one to a hotel in which there is as much comfort as a traveller has the right to expect.

In spite of Leland's testimony that 'there be countid 140 Islatts of Scilley,' I believe there is no exact record of the number of isles which compose the Scilly group. Scores of them are mere rock points. Their dangerous crests are visible enough at low water, when the gulls perch upon them, and give an exaggerated idea of general population to the district. But at half tide there is little to indicate them save the white eddies in the blue; and at high tide they have disappeared. Viewed from the elevated land of Tresco or St. Martin's, there is something fascinating about these inky seams upon the Atlantic; and especially on a

calm day, when the ocean is smooth and silvery. But they are eloquent of mournful memories. Hardly one of the rocks is without its association of a wreck or two.

The chief islands are St. Mary's, Tresco, St. Martin's, Agnes, and Bryher. None others are nowadays inhabited. St. Mary's, the largest, contains the capital, and the seat of local government, though Tresco is the residence of the gentleman who, as lessee under the Prince of Wales as Duke of Cornwall, is known locally as the Governor. All told, the population of the isles is under two thousand—with a diminishing tendency. The Governor does not favour an idle tenantry. The youths who will neither fish nor till the land nor keep shop are urged to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The Scilly damsels, unless snatched up as brides, are prone to aspire to become dressmakers in Penzance. Nothing could be better than this for the improvement of the local stock. In past days it was the fashion to intermarry to a deplorable degree. Indeed, the custom still holds, so that on Agnes you may safely address any man, woman, or child of the seven score inhabitants by the name of Hicks or Jenkins; even as, on St. Martin's, Ashford or Nance is a like pass word. But the Scillonians now see their error in this respect. Their little churchyards prove how many a youth and maiden dies ere maturity, which, in a land so notoriously salubrious, can be due only to consanguineous alliances.

St. Mary's, or Hugh Town, as the capital is indifferently called, is a clean unassuming little place of two or three streets of white houses. These broaden into a couple of squares where the shops, the banks, and sundry knots of seafaring gentlemen in blue jerseys create an aspect of commercial, or at least human activity. In May and June there is really a good deal of bustle in the place early and late. The steamer leaves in the morning, and arrives in the evening. In readiness for its departure, you may see the fishing luggers sail into the harbour by the dozen between six and nine o'clock. Their catch in the night is sold by the auctioneer on board with surprising expedition. As the boats are drawn up alongside the steamer, the spoil is displayed, and the mackerel are put up by the hundred (of six score), the bidding being confined to the Billingsgate and other agents here collected. Hake and other large fish are sold separately, or by the dozen. You hear such words as these, uttered very briskly: 'a shilling bid for these two fish—a bob, a bob, a bob,' and down goes the

hammer. The anglers may not think the price good, but at any rate they get their money on the spot. This scene continues until the anchor is up—luggers arriving to the very last minute. During the passage to Penzance the diverting processes of packing are gone through. And when the Billingsgate gentlemen have completely prepared their merchandise for the up train to town in the afternoon, they sit upon their baskets, light bad cigars, expectorate, and jest broadly with each other until the voyage is over.

Flowers and new potatoes contest with the mackerel the privilege of the deck room of these steamers. It is far from purgatorial to be wedged on board between a couple of cases of the Scilly white, an indigenous narcissus. They are much sweeter than the fish. You may see the cultivators row into the harbour with their cargoes from the other isles. One farmer of St. Martin's with whom I stayed sent as many as twelve thousand flowers in a day. At threepence a dozen (the wholesale price), this clearly means money. Of arum lilies also he was a considerable exporter. But their price is much more variable, veering between sixpence apiece during Holy Week and a shilling a dozen afterwards. For my part, I was much interested in what I saw of the flower culture in the isles. It is an ideal profession for the 'decayed gentlewomen' who advertise in the newspapers for something to do: clean, and sweet, and profitable. The Scillonians believe with good reason that the trade has not yet reached its farthest point of development. Each year sees another acre or two set out with narcissus bulbs. During the spring of 1891, a hundred and eighty tons of flowers left Scilly for England—excluding the post parcels. This does not look as if the south of France was, as some thought, about to push Scilly out of Covent Garden. The few hours' clear gain that the Scilly flowers have over the baskets from the Riviera are very precious in the esteem of florists.

It must not be supposed that vegetation is here anything like as profuse as in Madeira. In my ignorance I fancied it might be. I looked to see thickets of bougainvillea and heliotrope, and flowering geraniums as high as a house. But the isles are too small and exposed for this sort of thing. None of them are two miles across. The Atlantic storms are as bad in the Scillies as anywhere. If it were not for the well-established hedges of the Scilly elm and the *macrantha*, the salt spray and the gales would

soon destroy the best gardens of St. Mary's. Those of Tresco are more sheltered; the island of St. Mary's here acting as a screen in that terrible quarter, the south-west. Save on Tresco, it may almost be said that there are no trees in the archipelago, though the apple orchards in the middle of St. Mary's may seem to belie me. The islands consist mainly of low downs, covered with gorse and heather. You may scent the gorse miles away from the land, and the gold of it on the green hills is one of the prettiest features of Scilly. These downs end at the coast in granite rocks, though of no great size, with edges and cliffs perfectly appalling to vessels.

Even under the guard of three lighthouses and a lightship, the Scillies remain, and are likely to remain, a terror to mariners. Thousands of lives have been lost upon them. I almost gave up the affection I had generated for them when I saw the prodigious litter of ship's skeletons and heavy iron wreckage wedged among the great boulders of granite on their shores. It is the same with them all; though Agnes is the worst. Its south-westerly position makes it serve as a sort of snare for derelicts and corpses. On this island is the oldest of the Scilly lighthouses, a veteran of two centuries' standing. Among the many disasters of which it has been a witness, the wreck of Sir Cloudesley Shovell's fleet in 1707, and of the 'Schiller' in 1875, were probably the worst. But there is no end to the tale of the lesser calamities of these waters. No wonder the head keeper of this lighthouse is a somewhat melancholy man, seeing that he is of a reflective turn of mind. His landscape of rocks is about as enlivening to him as a square mile or two of tombstones.

The visitor who stays in the islands for more than ten days or a fortnight will hardly fail to see some rough weather. In my case, I brought it with me from Penzance. We had a lively passage, and a night of storm and fog in combination ensued. When I woke in the morning, it was to behold a procession of Cornish and Scilly luggers driving fast by my window into the haven of St. Mary's. They had seen the storm warning hoisted on the hill just behind the hotel, though, if they had not seen it, the wind, the sky, and the waves would have sufficiently admonished them. For the next two days they stayed in port, lounging heavily between the more sheltered corners of the streets, the public-houses, and the meteorological station, where the barometer was descending with a steady curve. And all this time the gusts

were continuous, and the sea thundered on the southern side of the island with a fury that was nothing less than frantic. The granite coast from Peninis Head to Pellistry Bay was like a fringe of fountains, so high did the spray rise in recoil from the rocks.

Confessedly, after two or three days of such weather one begins to tire of the sublime in nature. The wailing of the wind everywhere—in the streets, on the downs, and through the window-sash of one's bedroom—begins to depress the mind. Tales get into circulation about what has happened on the outlying islands. A body has been washed up somewhere, and certain fresh-looking pieces of wreckage. There is no fish at dinner-time. The groups of dissatisfied seamen in blue jerseys and jackboots fall out of humour with the weather, and gather round the window behind which the scoring-needle of the barometer marks persistently downhill. Some of them, in default of other employment, venture to get drunk in public—a sad scandal in so well-behaved a little place. It is annoying to be drenched every time one goes out for an hour or so; and the strenuous buffetings of the wind, agreeably exciting at first, affect one later as a series of impertinences of a somewhat exhausting kind. In short, a general spirit of discontent seems to settle upon the land when the bad weather has lasted forty or fifty hours. There are no new-comers at the hotels—small wonder at that, for the passage under such conditions, if possible at all, is apt to be sensational; and the boatmen, who depend largely for a livelihood upon their hired trips to Tresco, may as well twirl their brawny thumbs in the front parlour as think of business engagements at such a time. Only the gulls seem to enjoy it. Their unrestrained screaming, as they drive before the wind, among the masts of the luggers tossing at anchor, is, however, an additional irritant to the disturbed minds of the bipeds beneath them.

It is under such influences as these that one sinks into full sympathy with the more atrabilious effusions in the visitors' book. There is a solid proportion of them, which seems to prove that the Scilly air does not suit all sorts and conditions of people. Here is a stanza of an irregular kind which is a type of the rest:—

O fog-enwreathed Scilly !
Without regret I quit
Thy bare and rugged isles,
Recalling saddest scenes of woe and sudden death,
Telling of broken hearts and blighted happiness !

Perhaps the author did not get meals or a bed to his mind, or his liver was lethargic. A good dinner, a sound night's sleep, or a long walk on the downs might have changed his humour altogether. But, on the other hand, it is easy to see that a week of storms, a surfeit on the local literature or category of wrecks, and a bodily indisposition would suffice to affect the judgment of the most reasonable-minded man.

I shall not soon forget the May Day I spent in St. Mary's. At the hotel I was given to understand that great sights were in preparation. A May-queen was chosen. Of flowers for the adornment of her majesty and her majesty's attendants there was, of course, no lack. There was a May-pole in the larger square; the hotel flag was run up to the top of the flagstaff; and I was informed that from time immemorial it was the custom to eat junket and cream on this merry anniversary.

But, as ill-luck would have it, this was the second day of tempestuous weather. No sooner had the little maidens assembled for their first chant in the lesser square of the town than the clouds broke upon them. They were a charming sight in their mock bridal finery, girded and bowered with lilies and daffodils and the finest narcissi. But the weather was unconscionably rude. The wind tore the wreathing from the May-pole, and whistled on all sides so loudly that it drowned the infant voices. Ere half the processioning was over the mothers began to interfere with the ceremonial. It was not unnatural. An anniversary of the most inspiring kind is trivial compared to the diseases one may contract by undue exposure. And so the festival faded away, and the storm was left in charge of the town. The fisher lads, in their blouses and jack-boots, were also crowned with narcissi. Their weather-beaten bronzed faces looked well in such vicinity. But even they were not thoroughly tempest-proof, and ere long the streets were void of wayfarers, and a litter of flowers with broken stalks and bruised heads was eloquent of the May-day ruin which had followed the May-day hopes.

I was told that the modern May-queens of Scilly are nothing like as pretty as the May-queens of ten and twenty years ago. This, like other defects of the age, is supposed to be due to the march of civilisation. The more comely damsels think they may do better for themselves by emigrating to the mainland, and, when they marry, their children are not of course available for local May-day festivals. But I am disinclined to accept this slur

upon the existing matrons of the archipelago. It was proffered me by an unwedded lady in the midsummer-time of her life. She was, I judge, prejudiced against the younger generation.

With the barometer falling steadily by tenths of an inch, it did not look as if I could gain my wish of a passage to Tresco the next morning. In effect the storm was at its worst during the whole of the ensuing day. The fourth morning, however, dawned fair, in utter calm. I at once prepared to depart; but when I found that my boatman had been requisitioned to carry a coffin for the interment of a waif of the sea, 'three weeks in the water,' which had landed on Agnes at daybreak, I was delayed yet again. I might, of course, have sat on or in the coffin at my ease; but landsmen have their superstitions as well as sailors, and so I excused myself.

This brings me to one of the stock grievances of the islanders. In the old times they, like the Warden of the Cinque Ports, had a very considerable interest in the wrecks and derelicts which came upon their coasts. We read how, in A.D. 1300, the then Earl of Cornwall made a grant of the whole of St. Agnes (an island 312 acres in extent) with all its rents, customs, and wrecks cast ashore. A wreck was, in fact, a godsend, like the manna in the desert. It has been said, in reproach of the islanders of Agnes, that they were wont to pray for wrecks, entreating for the purpose their patron saint—Warna by name—who was reputed to have reached them from Ireland one day, and conferred a sort of sanctity upon them. Was there so much positive wickedness in this petitioning? Surely not. If a ship was so unfortunate as to be rëft of its crew, and lie at the mercy of the winds, was it not better that it should drive upon some land where its contents would be welcome to the inhabitants than that it should sink to the bottom of the Atlantic and profit nobody? On those grounds the ancient Hickses and Jenkinsons of Agnes seem to be justified in the prayers which some of us regard as so inexcusably ghoulisn.

Nowadays things are different. When a vessel goes to pieces off any of the isles, the revenue officers are quickly alive to what may happen. Merchandise is annexed. If the owners of the vessel are unknown, such property goes to the Crown. But, on the other hand, let a score or two of corpses float ashore, and what happens? The law compels the islanders to bury the bodies at their own expense. There is not even a fund for the purpose,

Coffins and inquests and boatmen's labour from St. Mary's together make up a stout little bill, which has to be met.

This is a sore subject in the islands, and well it may be. The Scillonians are ready enough to risk their lives in the cause of shipwrecked humanity. They do it gladly, for the fisher-folk among them know that they too may some day be in the like need of aid. But it is too bad that the Crown, which absorbs such unclaimed increment as the Atlantic proffers to the isles, should not defray the cost of the burial of the bodies (often in the worst of condition) which also come from the Atlantic.

A typical case of this hardship happened a few years ago, consequent upon the loss of a cattle vessel. A herd of dead bullocks drifted on to the islands. They had to be provided with graves, and the cost of their removal and obsequies was 130*l*. Of this the Governor paid 50*l*. The rest was raised by a local rate.

In the interests of humanity, if not in common fairness, a better system ought to be established. During my visits to the untenanted islets I remarked that my boatman religiously tramped round each rocky coast. His exercise resulted in sundry lengths of bamboo, slabs of cork, and the like. I asked him what he would have done if he had espied a corpse. He puckered his lip. Of course he would have done his duty. He would have drawn it above high-water mark, if it was not already there; and on his return to the capital he would have informed the authorities. But there was no doubting he would have done it more gladly, and perhaps been more eager to rescue the poor battered relic, if some reward was attached to the service.

The Crown might well do something in this matter. .

I am afraid my paper is a good deal more sombre in tone than I designed to make it. But really, if there be any fault in the affair, it must lie at the foot of the islands themselves. Wherever I went, these witnesses of ruin were there also. The island churchyards abound in tombstones upon which the words 'Lost at sea' are chiselled. On the coasts of the various islands I was constantly stumbling over iron rods or massive timbers torn from shattered ships, or clogging my feet in the briny clothes of some hapless mortal who in all probability lay peacefully in the bed of the Atlantic. The church bells were once ship's bells. The fencing over which I climbed to pass from one field or meadow to another was of ship's planks or beams set roughly side by side, with perhaps an iron balustrading that was once the

bulwark of a merchantman. The outhouses of the farmsteads are built of wreckage, and the door of the cowshed was formerly the door of some captain's cabin. How, under such conditions, is it possible to forget that one is in a land over which it may be said that the sweep of Death's broad-bladed scythe is for ever extending?

Worst of all, however, to me were the sights in the gardens to which I went with enthusiasm to inhale the perfume of the Scilly white and admire the healthy verdure of the young potato plants. Here, at any rate, it seemed to me that I should be in a sweet invigorating atmosphere. But I was mistaken. The figure-heads of dead ships met me at the end of the leafy avenues between the various flower-beds. You can easily imagine them: a Jack-tar, large as life, with one cheek knocked away; the 'Mary Jane,' 'Friar Tuck,' 'The Admiral,' 'The Spanish Girl,' 'The Dolphin,' and so on. At the famous Tresco Gardens there is an entire shed of them among the tree-ferns and palms. To me it was dreadful: better than being in a charnel-house, yet not much better. Each wooden shape was an epitome of the woe that had befallen the vessel of which it had been a part, and of the men and women whom it had carried to their doom.

Were I Lord of the Isles, I would bury these many figure-heads out of sight. They may not be pestilential, like derelict bullocks, but in every other respect they have as much right to be underground.

And now of the fairer side of life in the Scillies. It exists, though one might almost profess doubt of it. Some say it lies in the very temperate climate of the isles, the mean in winter seldom going below 45°, and in summer seldom rising above 58°. Snow is a rarity. This year, however (1891), there was enough of it to make the oldest inhabitant think the world was coming to an end. The children, less experienced, thought the sky was raining sugar-plums.

They live long in the Scillies if they survive the first thirty years of life. Hale octogenarians are numerous for a community less than two thousand in number. A certain Tresco man of eighty-seven or eight (he couldn't remember which) was my boatman one day to St. Martin's, an island two miles away. He rowed me thither, and while I was there he took himself off for a few hours into the open Atlantic and caught half a score of fine pollock, after which he returned to convey me back to Tresco. I

let him do all this because I wished to see if he was as capable as he was reputed to be. They told me he was full of knowledge about the islands; but he was so cautious and reticent that I am constrained to believe he has not always 'acted on the square.' Indeed, he let out that he had borne many a barrel upon his back in the old days, by which he meant smuggled rum and brandy. He also told with pride how, some forty years ago, when a merchantman drove upon an island north of Tresco, he was the second man aboard her in the morning. I saw much of this old fellow, but he was never more interesting than when I met him for the first time prowling among the granite blocks of the north coast of Tresco, with bent back, his white beard shaking to and fro, and a coil of rope round his meagre waist. I asked him what he was doing. He glanced at me shrewdly with his beady eye, and replied, in a shrill pipy voice, 'I be just looking to see if I can pick up some bits of things; but it be a bad time; there be nothing here.' 'Ah, Agnes!' he exclaimed, when I mentioned my visit to that fatal island, 'there's plenty there. There be many a ship goes to pieces off Crebewethan and them, and washes up there.' He was glad on this occasion to get rid of me, and I left him peering like a gull this way and that as he groped along.

Yet, though undoubtedly salubrious, there is a good deal of fog over the islands at times. This would not suit all invalids, quite apart from the effect the warning-guns in the night from the Bishop Lighthouse might have upon people of a nervous temperament. In the little churchyard of the island of Bryher (area 268 acres; population about 100) there is a tombstone to one Jacob Hicks, who died in 1852, aged ninety-six. He was probably the patriarch of the isles, a position which, from part of his epitaph, he seems to have valued:—

This is to let you see
I've had the fifth generation on my knee.

The absence of the usual kinds of social amusement may also be regarded as a deterrent for people in ill health, to whom diversion is one of the best of tonics. A Methodist cantata, now and then, appears to be the most advanced form of dissipation in the capital. To be sure, there is a local book-club; but as the subscribers are still busy with Scott's novels, it will be long ere the writers of our time come into their hands. I was asked what I thought of Waverley much as in town one is asked one's opinion of the latest of Ibsen's trifles.

However, I need say no more on this count. There is no resident invalid population here as in Penzance or Torquay. A single doctor looks after the entire archipelago, upon a tariff of five shillings per visit in the day-time, and ten shillings by night. As in other island groups, the islanders on such occasions take their turns in manning the boat which is to convey the doctor to his patient. The poor gentleman sometimes earns his fee at considerable self-sacrifice.

To my mind the charm of the islands is the simple primitive life of the islanders. To appreciate this, it is of course needful to abandon the hotels of St. Mary's, with their charges of eighteen-pence daily for attendance. The other islands do not breed hotels, though there is a house in Tresco where visitors can lunch, and a licensed house also in Bryher. On Agnes or St. Martin's you are at the mercy of the hospitality of the people; and it is the same in the eastern part of St. Mary's.

I spent three days in the little white house of a retired mariner on the east coast of Tresco, and quite fell in love with the serenity of the life. It was a house built shipwise. To enter it one had to stoop as if one were going down a hatchway; to ascend to the bedroom it was further necessary to take heed of one's head. Here I lived on plain food and kept early hours. The walls were populous with grocers' and drapers' Christmas almanacs. A funeral card or two kept me in mind of my mortality. The crockery and cutlery were of an unassuming kind. I drank out of a Jubilee mug, with the words 'A present for a good little girl' upon it. The cooking was far below club standard.

But what of all this? There was nothing really of the nature of a hardship about it, and as a change it was delightful. The ex-mariner's boat was moored just outside, under the cottage wall, which at high tide the Atlantic half hid. It was easy enough to get into it and row to Norwethel, Tean, St. Helen's, or the serrated shape of Menawore, in search of adventures. The adventures were of course likely to be of the moderate order; but I was content enough when I found myself chased by the thirteen young bullocks of Tean (unused to the sight of mortals) with singular unanimity and in a lusty manner that reminded me of a Spanish bull ring. On St. Helen's there is what some take for the ruins of a church, and also the dismantled building which years back was used as a pesthouse. The bedsteads upon which the sick sailors lay still stand disjointedly in the roofless rooms.

On calm days at low tide the space between Tresco and St. Martin's presented an odd appearance. Its two miles of waterway shrank to three or four poor little channels between the black island rocks, and here, too, care was essential to avoid sticking upon one of the protrusive weed-clad granite edges which peeped above the blue water. The white sand underneath coloured the shallow currents pale green. The perfume and gold of the gorse upon all the islands in sight added to the charm of the scene.

There was further an old seventeenth-century block-house on a headland within gunshot of the cottage window, and soft turf with scentless violets in it on the slope from the block-house to the sea. The Tresco church was about as near in another direction—a bijou place of worship, with Himalaya palms and palmetto dispersed among the graves. From the low wind-blown patch of firs a little more remote, the cuckoo sounded its soothing note from still grey morn to dewy eve. And by climbing the hill in the middle of the island, I could in a little while reach the Smith monument, set in the heart of a gorse thicket, with rabbits speeding hither and thither, and the finest panorama of the islands north, south, east, and west. This was the place for the sunset. Even though the wind might be ever so fierce, the granite base of the pile (in memory of the late Governor) afforded stout protection from it; and with one's back to the thing, one might watch the changing hues of the sky until the gloaming had arrived, and the lonely rock of the Bishop Lighthouse, four miles from inhabited land, had disappeared into the distance.

It was a cottage, too, for lazy moods, as well as for a certain amount of romance. For there was a well-made bench in the sandy garden, with some gillyflowers and young onions growing in front of it; and the ex-mariner had a famous telescope through which one could see the men of the Round Island Lighthouse (the third in the archipelago) moving about their limited rocky domain. Like other ex-mariners, this good fellow could tell yarns beginning—'When we were off Cape Hatteras, one day in the year so and so.' But he was never so utterly tiresome or mendacious as some of his brethren are apt to be on the like themes.

In this little cottage I was treated with as much distinction as possible for four-and-sixpence a day.

It was nearly the same on the island of St. Martin. Here I was the guest of a farmer in the Middle Town; and it was settled (not without apology from the farmer's wife about the extravagance

of the charge) that I should pay four shillings daily for my board and lodging. The chief article in the bill of fare was clotted cream. At low tide my host collected cockles from the sandy shore looking towards St. Mary's, three miles distant. These, with excellent plum-cake and a tin of Australian meat, may be described as the table dainties of St. Martin's. My bedroom window opened into the greenhouse, in which heliotrope and hundreds of cut narcissi ready for the market made a perfume that was almost too sweet for sufferance. There was no end to the amiability of the household. One day the farmer had the butcher over from St. Mary's, and a two-year-old ox was slain in the presence of the people. That evening, when I went to bed, the gory head of the slaughtered beast hung at the foot of my staircase, to remind me of a nursery picture of the decapitation of Goliath. And on the following day part of the 'offal' enriched the principal meal.

But it was more especially outside the farmhouse and its narcissus beds that I took my pleasure on St. Martin's. The island is only about five hundred acres in extent, but it is an enchanting combination of rocky coast, white sandy bays, and grassy downs with gorse and heather and crimson stonecrop on them. The hills pervade it; and from the balmy ridge Cornwall seems quite near. Fortunately the weather was exquisite while I was here. At low tide I walked to White Island, and inspected the deep fissure which some think a relic of ancient tin-prospecting Romans. There is no present trace of tin in the cutting; but if man's handiwork is not in the quarry, Nature is a subtler imitatrix of it than one would expect to find her. This island, like most of the others, is destined in no long time to be divided into two parts. The Atlantic pinches the waists of the isles until, after a series of spring tides, channels form in their midst. Thus the archipelago has no doubt been made, and thus the number of its parts is ever on the increase.

I think the view of the islands from the St. Martin's downs is even more interesting than that from Tresco. Here we are not in the middle of the group. It is all spread out beneath us upon one side; while upon the other side is the Atlantic and the grey outline of the Cornish coast beyond. Seen by moonlight, the interlacing of the reefs in the silvery water is a remarkable sight. At such a time, too, there will be the witness of half a dozen lighthouses to suggest that not always are the Scillies so sweet

and idyllic a picture. For not only are the local lights visible from these downs of St. Martin, but those of Cornwall also.

St. Martin's ought to be a moral little land. Its inhabitants neither smoke tobacco nor drink strong drink. There is no licensed house in its three miles of length. In case of need, a certain householder will provide a little brandy; but one may conjecture that the need will have to be extreme before it is administered. The perfume of my cigar seemed to certain members of my household a very strange kind of smell. I am sorry to say it by no means met with approval from the pretty young daughter of the farmer. She it was who picked the narcissi for the British market, and deftly tied them in bunches of twelve. Her mother and father rated her for her daintiness, but she was not to be led against her own instincts. In other ways I was not to her liking. When first I entered the house as a guest, she made me happy by her readiness to wait upon me and by the winsome blushes upon her cheeks. Somehow it was assumed I was a woollen draper, or at least a grocer. But when, in response to leading questions put to me at meal-time, I avowed that I lived by my pen, and even wrote stories, all the attractive lustre faded from her eyes, and a leaden look of reproach took its place. 'Stories!' she exclaimed, 'how can a man write such things—all lies!' There was not a doubt that I had degraded myself in her esteem. And I resolved there and then that when I return to St. Martin's, it shall be with a portmanteau half full of pattern-books. But I fear, long ere that time comes, one of the young men of St. Martin's will have taken her to a certain little white house, with its appanage of narcissus beds and new-potato patches.

NEEDLE-CRAFT.

A SMALL matter—the invention of marking-ink—elbowed out of fashion the sampler, which, up to the date of our adoption of that indelible fluid as a means of marking our linen, was in general use for the furtherance of the education of girls. Our mothers and grandmothers, and theirs, and those who stood in the same relation to them, all worked samplers in their school-days as certainly as they filled copybooks with writing exercises and slates with simple sums. Taste, ingenuity, precision, patience, and industry were all cultivated in the performance of this work of homely art, as surely as these advantages and virtues are developed by instruction in the various crafts approved by the advocates of the Sloyd system as a means of all-round culture. Besides the rows of letters and figures worked on them in fine crossed stitches, there were fanciful borders wrought round them, and differentiated ornamental lines inserted between them; then there were pyramidal trees in pots worked in the corners, and dogs and birds of wonderful presentment insinuated promiscuously; and, added to these, there were, in some examples, verses of hymns and mottoes of admonitory purport, such as ‘Fear God and Honour the King,’ worked in finer stitches above the name and age of the worker. They are still to be seen, in black frames, in many pleasant, peaceful old-fashioned homes—no longer, perhaps, in the parlours where they were first placed proudly, but in some less prominent position—and they must always be interesting as links in the long chain of ornamental needle-craft with which feminine industry has enriched our houses from remote times. They must not be confused with the less appealing work of a later date called Berlin woolwork, which differed from them completely, especially in the treatment of the backgrounds of the groups of gaudy flowers and high-toned figures of which it was composed, which groundwork was worked all over to be of one uniform tint, whereas the sampler left the soft white canvas background bare.

Of much more considerable account, however, are the great pieces of tapestry preserved in the various country seats of our nobility and gentry. Not a few of the touches that give so much

enchantment to Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, for instance, are imparted by the solemn 'hangings,' the superb pieces of tapestry that were there when the bewitching Dorothy Vernon lived in it, and its grey courts and green terraces were enlivened with the passing to and fro of much goodly company and many retainers. Hardwick Hall, too, in the same county, owes much of its Elizabethan air to the needlework of the Countess of Shrewsbury, and a great deal of its romance to that of Mary Queen of Scots, who languished there for a time as a prisoner. The lightness of this fabric, owing to the fact that there is 'more glass than wall' in it, its palatial extent, the trimness, the general old-world aspect, impart impressions of their own; but without the needlework, the arras on the walls, the hangings and counterpanes on the state beds, and the cushions and other adornments of the chairs, we could not realise so completely the features of Elizabethan home-life. We know that a correspondent of Sir William Cecil reported to him that Mary Queen of Scots mentioned that 'all day she wrought with her nydill, and that diversity of the colours made the work less tedious, and she contynned so long at it till very payne made her to give over.' And we feel that even Holyrood Palace would not be quite so weird, so haunted-looking, and so full of fancies, without its faded tapestry and timeworn bed-hangings. The subtle and indescribable charm of Wolsey's great palace at Hampton Court also owes much to its tapestry. In fact, whenever we come into the presence of ancient needlework on a grand scale, those who have eyes to see are brought under an impressive influence that is difficult to put into words.

Of all the ancient needlework that time and chance have left us, the piece representing the invasion of England by William the Conqueror, the defeat of Harold at Senlac, and the retreat of the Saxons, must be considered of the most curious and valuable interest. This work has been time out of mind ascribed to the needle of Matilda, wife of the Conqueror. Two other Matildas—the wife and the daughter of Henry I.—have also been accredited with it by antiquaries who were unable to reconcile the claim made in favour of the Conqueror's wife with certain facts connected with it. The latest opinion of the best informed on the subject, however, is that it was made to the order of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, brother of the Conqueror, as a decoration or enrichment for a particular place corresponding with its dimensions in the cathedral of Bayeux, in which edifice it has always been kept—as

we may see by mention of it in inventories—till it was removed to the town library in the same city. It consists of a roll of linen 19 inches wide and about 211 feet long, on which are outlined, in coloured wool or crewel, an immense number of small figures representing the occurrence of various incidents preceding and attending the conquest of this country by William of Normandy, with many short inscriptions elucidating them. Little peculiarities in the language of these inscriptions, taken into consideration with the costumes and with a certain custom that was in vogue at the time of shaving the backs of men's heads, minutely delineated, have helped modern authorities to the certainty that the work is contemporaneous with the events depicted in it.

Looking into it very closely, too, it has been noted that the figure most frequently represented, with the exception of the royal personages, is that of Odo, and that the few officers in it that are mentioned by name are those who are known to have been in his service and to have held large estates under him in Kent and other counties; and, coupling these facts with the certainty that the bishop only would have the power of allowing a profane subject to be introduced into a sacred building as a decoration, it is concluded by both French and English authorities that, whether it was the work of his royal sister-in-law or not, it was placed in the cathedral by his leave or order. The work begins with a representation of King Edward the Confessor seated upon his throne and conversing with two persons. One of these is supposed to be Harold, who, further on, is shown with a hawk on his wrist riding to Bosham, which was then a royal seaport. We are next shown a church and two persons entering it, and several figures drinking in an upper chamber of a house adjoining it, whence preparations are made by other figures—one of which is descending stairs with an oar in his hand—to reach a boat. Two ships full of warriors and mariners are then depicted, in connection with which an inscription informs us that Harold crossed the sea and went full sail into the territory of the Count de Ponthieu. In conformity with the mediæval usage of detaining strangers till ransomed, Harold is arrested by the Count, and is shown as being conducted to a château at Belrem. There is a dwarf shown holding horses, whose name is given as Turolde. Then another interview is delineated, and the next inscription mentions that the Count conducted Harold to William in person. The roll proceeds to portray a grand expedition, in which Harold assists William against Conan,

Duke of Brittany, and an inscription records, 'Here William gave arms to Harold.' Various details follow, with some of which we are all familiar, such as Harold's oath to William, his return to England and interview with Edward the Confessor, the death-bed and funeral of that monarch, the crowning of Harold by Archbishop Stigand, the appearance of a comet; and then Harold is shown on the throne listening to a messenger who appears to have brought momentous tidings. The inscriptions explain that the scene is removed again to Normandy: 'Here an English ship came into the dominions of Duke William;' and we are shown men hewing down trees, building ships, dragging them down to the beach and lading them with arms and provisions, under the heading, 'Here Duke William commanded ships to be built.' Seventeen or eighteen ships are depicted as arriving at Pevensey, followed by the landing of horses and foraging for provisions. A warrior on horseback is named as 'Here is Wadard'—now identified as one of Bishop Odo's officers. Cooks are shown as dressing meat preparatory to a banquet, at which, we may see, the Normans made use of their shields for tables, and Bishop Odo said grace whilst an attendant knelt near him.

Another inscription records that William ordered a fort to be built at Hastings; and then we see a house on fire, from which a woman and boy are escaping, which is probably one of the incidents of the crisis that was well known. Duke William is now to be made out at the head of his knights armed with a club, with two banners borne behind him; and, again, interrogating Vidal as to the resources of the army of Harold; and, immediately afterwards, we may see Harold receiving similar information concerning William's army. The invader is next depicted haranguing his followers; and then the grand onslaught is portrayed. 'Here fell together English and French in battle,' records an inscription, after the death of Harold's brothers Lewin and Gurth. Bishop Odo, clad in armour, on horseback, is shown encouraging the invading forces; and, beneath the words, 'Here is Duke William,' the Conqueror is portrayed in the act of raising his helmet, as if to prove his identity to his followers. The great encounter is followed by the death of Harold, before which he is shown as fighting valiantly by the side of his standard-bearer, and then endeavouring to draw out the arrow that has pierced his eye. He is represented as falling to the ground, and a Norman knight wounding him in the thigh. Lastly, the English are depicted in headlong flight, and

the tapestry comes to an end, torn and ragged and illegible. Wace's '*Roman du Rou*' does not give us a more vivid presentation of this great historical event, nor are the accounts handed down by historians more full or more precise.

Domesday Book makes mention of a certain Aluuid who held two hides of land in Buckinghamshire free to bequeath or sell, and half a hide that was only granted to her by Earl Godric for the time he should be earl, on condition that she taught his daughter to work embroidery; and there is record in the same survey of another embroideress, Leuide by name, who made embroidery for the king and queen. From this time wills, inventories, and accounts make frequent mention of embroiderers and the '*Crafte of Brauderie*.' The wife of Alderet of Winchester worked a chasuble of sufficient worth to be left by will, by Queen Matilda, to the Abbey of the Trinity at Caen. Isabella, queen of Edward II., paid Rose, wife of John de Bureford, a hundred marks for a cope. But we read of men as practising the craft as well as women. Adam de Basinges was paid 24*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* for a cope of red silk presented to the Bishop of Hereford by Henry III., and further sums for two embroidered chasubles for the royal chapel, and tunics and dalmatics. Thomas Cheiner was paid 140*l.* for a vest of velvet embroidered with divers work, purchased by Edward III. for his own chaplain. Richard II. and his queen appointed Stephen Vyne their chief embroiderer, and Henry IV. subsequently granted him a pension in recognition of his skill. In the Issue Roll for the year 1366 there is an entry of a payment made to William Courtenay for a dalmatic wrought with pelicans, images, and tabernacles of gold for Edward III. The Close Rolls of a previous period, 1252, record that John de Sumercote and Roger the tailor were commanded to get made four robes of the best brocade, of which two were for the king and two for the queen, in anticipation of the marriage of the Princess Margaret. One of the queen's tailor-made costumes was ordered to be of a violet colour, embroidered with three small leopards in front and three behind. We can only conclude, therefore, that both sexes pursued this elegant trade; and it may be that the men attended to what we may term the tailoring and the goldsmith's work, and the embroideresses executed the delicate needlework.

As well as being lavishly applied to wearing apparel for royal personages, ecclesiastics, and other persons wealthy enough to procure it, embroidery was largely used in churches for the altar-

cloths, frontals, enrichment of bier-cloths, and hangings. The Bayeux tapestry was evidently used as a frieze-like decoration; and most of the religious houses possessed collections of needlework of various kinds. Lincoln Cathedral, for example, is said to have owned upwards of six hundred vestments richly wrought with jewellery and gold; and York, Durham, London, and Peterborough also possessed many specimens. Pieces of rich needlework were often given to these establishments as 'offerings,' and many more were left to them by will. Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham, left some very costly examples to his cathedral, for instance, and Hugh Pudsey, King Stephen's nephew, did the same. At Wardour Castle two altar fronts of velvet have been preserved; several other private collections have many more, and a few of our country churches can boast of altar-cloths and pulpit-cloths of ancient needlework.

Another large field for the display of embroidery consisted of banners. King John ordered Reginald de Cornhill to furnish him with five banners with his arms embroidered on them, in 1215; and the French poet who has left us a description of the Siege of Carlaverock mentions particularly that the banners and caparisons of the knights and soldiers were embroidered on silk and satin with their arms. Perhaps the most interesting example of a military kind we have left us is the jupon worn by the Black Prince, and hung up over his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, with his gauntlets, helm, sword, and shield. Those who have been permitted to examine it minutely describe it as made of velvet, that was once crimson, on a foundation of fine buckram or calico. Between these two materials there is a padding of cotton, and the whole is stitched and quilted together longitudinally, or gamboised. On the velvet are the arms of the Prince, embroidered in gold, which have been worked on linen and then attached to it. It has been pointed out that the effigy on the tomb is clad in a garment that is precisely like it in every particular, even to a half fleur-de-lys that occurs on it.

We know also that it was used for domestic enrichments in various forms. In the inventory of the effects of Henry V. there is set down a 'bed of embroidered figs.' The fashion for these rich bed-hangings continued down to Stuart times, as Evelyn states that the embroidery of James II.'s bed at Whitehall cost 3,000*l*. There seems, however, to have been an exceptional wave of extravagance in the matter of needlework in

the reign of Edward III., as that monarch enacted that no one whose income was below four hundred marks per annum should wear cloth of gold or enamelled or embroidered drapery. The prohibition does not appear to have had the effect intended, for in the reign of Henry IV. the matter was brought before Parliament by a complaint that divers persons practising the craft used 'unsuffisaunt stuff,' unduly wrought, and privately sent their work to fairs in different parts of the country, to the great deceit of the sovereign lord the king and all his people. Whereupon an order was made that such counterfeit articles should be seized and forfeited to the king.

We read of *baudekyn*, *samit*, *tarterain*, and cloth of gold as materials that were embroidered, as well as linen, velvet and silk. The design of the needlework worked on these substances appears to have been first cut out of linen to the desired shape, and all the edges of this foundation bound or made good, and then these patterns were covered with stitches, and finally sewn on to the groundwork, and scroll-work or tendrils added to them. Spangles and pearls were both used as embellishments. John de Colonia made a white robe worked with pearls for Queen Philippa. Heraldic devices, such as leopards, white harts, lions, griffins, peacocks, dragons, falcons, swans, hearts, moons, stars, flowers, and leaves were of ordinary occurrence. More elaborate efforts consisted of seraphs and various sacred figures and representations of sacred events. A different process was used for tapestry when made by the hand, in which the canvas was completely covered with woolwork, which generally represented in pictorial fashion life-sized figures engaged in various ways. Miss Linwood's exhibition of her own needle-wrought tapestry, in Leicester Square, about fifty years ago, afforded an opportunity for an examination of the mode of proceeding. Before the needle could begin to ply, an artist was required to design the pictures to be wrought, just as imperatively as in the case of the more numerous pieces manufactured with the aid of mechanical processes, and although not always a Raphael or a Mantegna, he must have been a person of considerable culture. All that was required of the needle was to reproduce his work as faithfully as it could.

When our attention is turned to ancient needlework we can but be interested in its continuity, and struck with the amount of it that has been executed, and with the frequent mention of it, incidentally or otherwise, in old writings. The writer of the Book of

Exodus makes mention of embroidery three times, that of the Book of Ezekiel half a dozen times. Homer dwelt with minuteness on a garment with gold embroidery representing the chase of a fawn that Penelope gave Ulysses. The monkish historian, Reginald of Durham, in describing the aversion St. Cuthbert felt to women, related that an embroideress, 'nobly skilled,' determined to pass the limits he had assigned to them, but was detected intuitively and ignominiously expelled from the church. Froissart gives an account of a dispute that arose between two knights who had the same devices embroidered upon their surcoats, to which each of them thought he was exclusively entitled. Chaucer makes frequent mention of it, as when he says of the young squire among the Canterbury pilgrims, 'embrowdid was he, as it were a mede, Al ful of fresshe floures, white and reede;' and of the carpenter's fair wife, that 'whit was hir smok and browdid al byfore and eek byhynde.'

But more impressive than such allusions are the items that are left to us with all their fragrance of old times, all the pathos of old memories, and the distinct characteristics of successive centuries, whether they are the rich robes of ecclesiastics, as in Durham library; the pennons and pennoncelles of brave knights who fought at Flodden, as at Edinburgh; or the dainty faded work that decorates the bower of a dame of good repute, as at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire; or the flowered white satin pocket-book worked for Dr. Johnson, now in Lichfield Museum; or the work of more recent days, such as the chair-seats marked 'D. W.' in Wordsworth's cottage. Each example, according to its kind, is reminiscent and suggestive in a high degree.

CHARACTER NOTE.

THE SCHOLAR.

'Qui vit sans folie n'est pas si sage qu'il le croit.'

HE is forty-five years old. He is erudite, classic, and scholarly. He knows everything. What can be duller than a man who knows everything? He is scientific and botanical. He wears grey thread gloves—a size too large—goloshes and a comforter. And yet when his college presents him with a living—a remote living in the wilds of an eastern county—he purposes to be married.

This Fossil, with traces of an ice age clearly left on his formal manners and punctilious and guarded speech, engages himself to Leonora.

Leonora is romantic as her name declares. But Leonora's guardian is eminently practical. Thinks the college living will do. And so Leonora is betrothed to it.

Leonora is sweet and twenty. With brown curls tied at the back of her head with a ribbon. With an arch smile. With a charming gift of singing—to the harp. *She* is not erudite. It is not the fashion for young ladies to be erudite in her time. When her elderly lover shows her specimens through a microscope—which is his ridiculous old way of expressing admiration for her—she is never able to decide whether she is looking at a flower or a beetle. She is wholly volatile and lovely and inattentive. All his love-making is full of instruction. It is an absurd, pedantic way of showing one's affection. But it is almost the only way he has. And there are worse, perhaps.

They go for their honeymoon to the Riviera. And the Riviera of forty years ago had much more of heaven and less of earth about it than the Riviera of the present day.

Beneath the deep eternal blue and the everlasting sunshine of its skies the Fossil's punctilious formality melts a little. He still goes about in a comforter and searches for specimens through near-sighted spectacles. But under the balmy warmth of an Italian sun—and of Leonora—his chilliness of manner experiences a slight thaw. It is thought that for those few brief weeks he is, in some

very slight degree of course, as another man might be. It is certain that his botanical friends at Cambridge are considerably disappointed in the collection of Italian flora he has to show them on his return home. Perhaps the *flos* he has studied most is the flowered-faced Leonora at his side. Leonora with her poke-bonnet hung upon her arm, with her curls shaken back and her wicked, laughing, roguish face turned up to his—looking for all the world like one of those ridiculous pictures in an old-fashioned Book of Beauty.

Leonora hates science—and stops the scientist's prosy mouth with a kiss. Leonora can't bear botany, and likes the flowers much better without those interminable Latin names tacked on to them.

Is she in love with her Fossil? Who shall say? It is preposterous and unnatural that she should be. But the preposterous and unnatural both happen occasionally.

Is her Fossil in love with her? A hideous old fright in goloshes, a tedious moth-eaten old bookworm has no right to be in love with anyone.

Then they go home to the country vicarage. The country vicarage is the incarnation of dullness, dampness, and ugliness. And Leonora sings about the house and scandalises the servants. The furniture is immensely solid and frightful. And Leonora's shawl is thrown here, and her work—in dreadful disorder—there, and roses from the garden in great bowls everywhere.

The Fossil, before he was married, had drawn up a solemn code of rules for the guidance of the household. A bell to tell them to get up; a bell to tell them to come down; a bell for prayers; a bell to begin breakfast, and a bell to finish it. And Leonora stops her ears when she hears these warnings, and is never less than ten minutes late for meals.

The Fossil sits in his study, scientific and theological, and Leonora breaks in upon this sanctum, without tapping, with her face glowing and laughing, and shuts up the abstruse work with a bang. She drags the Fossil into the garden, without his goloshes. When she wants to do something incompatible with his Evangelical principles, she lays her fresh face against his parchment cheek and says it isn't any good saying 'No,' because she really Must. And she always does.

The Fossil had a great scientific work in hand when he was married—an elaborate treatise upon the Paleozoic Epoch—but it proceeds lamentably slowly. He attempts to write in the evening

after dinner, and Leonora draws out the harp from its corner and sings to it. She sings 'Rose Softly Blooming' and 'Where the Bee Sucks,' and the great work does not proceed at all.

Then Leonora is ill, and the little daughter is dead before she is born. But Leonora is soon better—well enough to lie on the sofa and be sweet, foolish, and tiresome once more. The Fossil sits by her side gravely. Sometimes he brings her flowers, without their botanical names. He proses scientifically, as from long habit; but he looks the while at her transparent colour and her shining eyes, and the science is at times unscholarly and even incorrect. Leonora looks back at him with the old arch, laughing glance, and with something more behind it. It is a something they do not say—which can never be said. Perhaps the one thinks that the other does not know it. It may be so. To the last Leonora is very much better—'Nearly quite well' in answer to a daily question. On the last evening the Fossil is proposing a change to the seaside to complete her cure, and she dies with a smile and a jest, infinitely tender and selfless, upon her lips.

The neighbourhood, who could not be expected to like an 'eccentric old thing' like the Fossil, decides that he is shockingly heartless. He appears at Leonora's funeral actually in a red comforter. There are no signs of emotion upon his face. The lines may be a trifle deeper upon it, perhaps; but then he was always deeply lined, so that does not count.

He completes the great work; he draws up a new and more ridiculous code of rules for his household; and then he marries again. His wife is perfectly virtuous, amiable, and meaningless. She obeys the bells to a second; she never interrupts his studies; she never lets the children disturb him; his comforter and gloves are never out of their places. She is a sweet wife—a great deal too good for him.

He grows duller and more erudite yearly. A visitor describes him as a Lump of Science. He composes immensely learned and dreary sermons. The six yokels who usually form his congregation very sensibly go to sleep. The chill formality of his manner repulses the parishioners and frightens his children. He attempts to teach these children out of his fusty stores of scientific lore, but they are too awe-struck to comprehend anything—supposing that they had the ability, which they have not.

Their mother dies; they grow up and go out into the world. As far as the Fossil is concerned, they are virtually dead also; but

then, as far as he is concerned, they might almost as well never have been alive.

He is not more lonely than he has been for twenty years. He passes all day in his study among his books. That the room is damp and dreary matters little to him. The books are behind the time. He is behind the time himself. Between him and the musty work over which his old head bends comes sometimes a vision of the days that once were and never will be any more. The Italian sunshine above, the touch of a hand, the sound of a laughing voice, a girl's face, brilliant and tender, and he sees—Leonora.

THE ARBOUR IN THE GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Mrs. Lilburne returned from the picnic and dismounted at her own garden gate from the three-horse brake which had carried the party, she assured Mr. Chessall that she had had a most enjoyable day, and she meant what she said. Mrs. Lilburne was fond of picnics, and this had been a very successful one. Miss Lilburne too told Mr. Chessall, that she had enjoyed herself immensely, and then when he smiled back at her, well pleased, she wondered whether she had been perfectly candid and truthful. Instead of going into the house she sat down on one of the garden-seats to think the matter over. In the first place, she was quite sure that she ought to have enjoyed the picnic very much indeed; for she was engaged to Mr. Chessall, and he had got up the whole thing chiefly to please her—he had told her so—and had consulted her weeks before as to who should be invited, and about all the other arrangements. Then the weather had been perfect, and nobody had been ill-natured or gloomy. Still Miss Lilburne felt that the affair had not been very lively, and she was inclined to think that it was because Mr. Chessall had lectured too much. The scene of their festivity had been Kelvington Castle, a famous old ruin, and Mr. Chessall had discoursed upon its antiquities at great length. He had talked a great deal of English history and told several anecdotes. She had read them all before; history and anecdotes alike were in the ‘Antiquities of South Devon,’ and it was plain that Augustus (Mr. Chessall) had got up the subject from that volume. And then his speech was so very slow, he used such big words, and she had noticed somebody yawning while he laboured on. And in the midst of his eloquence she had been picturing the future. When they were married, they would still be living in Knagford, and friends would come and stay with them in the summer—Knagford was such a pretty place, and there was good fishing—and all these friends would be taken to Kelvington Castle, and her husband would discourse to them as he had done to-day, and she would hear the same stories over and over again. The prospect seemed a little depressing. At the same time she felt that she ought not to feel

like that. One may detect faults in a husband; a lover must be perfect.

Miss Lilburne's reflections were interrupted by her mother, who came out into the garden, holding a card in her hand.

'Adelaide,' she said, 'do you remember the Christian name of that Dr. Wilson who used to live in Knagford?'

A light blush sprang to the girl's cheek as she replied:

'I think it was Ernest, mamma; I am nearly sure of it.'

'Well,' Mrs. Lilburne continued, handing the card to her daughter, 'a Dr. Ernest Wilson called while we were out this afternoon; I suppose it's the same. But it's five or six years since he went out to Australia or somewhere there, so I wonder what he can want at Knagford now?'

Adelaide did not reply for some time; at last she said slowly:

'I expect it is the same man, mamma. But it was Borneo he went to, not Australia. And he has come to see George. You know what friends they were!'

Here Mrs. Lilburne's youngest daughter, Maud, a tall, good-looking girl of eighteen, emerged from a sort of rustic arbour formed of trellis-work and overhanging creepers.

'Ah! you picnickers are back again,' she said abruptly. 'I'm very glad I didn't go, I had a most interesting novel, quite exciting. And I've just finished it, and everything turns out beautifully.'

Then her eye fell on the card which Adelaide was still twirling between her fingers.

'I saw him,' she exclaimed. 'It's the tall doctor—you remember him, Adelaide?—who used to go fishing with George. Only he's got dreadfully brown. I was in the arbour, you know, and I could see quite well, though he couldn't see me. When he found you weren't in he came away very slowly, and he stopped right in front of the arbour, and I was afraid he was coming in. But he didn't.'

This incident had quite changed the current of Adelaide's thoughts, but they were busier than ever in the new direction they had taken. At the 'high tea,' which, in deference to the solid nature of Mr. Chessall's lunch, had replaced the usual dinner, she was very absent-minded, and had to endure much raillery from her younger sister, who supposed she was thinking tenderly of the absent Augustus. Later on Mr. Chessall came, and Adelaide and he strolled about in the garden together, while Mrs.

Lilburne sat under the verandah, and beamed on them benevolently. This was the usual course of procedure in fine weather. Generally Mr. Chessall when left alone with his betrothed hadn't very much to say, but on this occasion the picnic had given him some material and put him in excellent vein. He was able to make depreciatory remarks on the dress of more than one young lady who had been present, and he found this exercise of his sarcastic powers very agreeable. So Adelaide's abstraction passed unnoticed, and the evening went by very pleasantly, and he was quite surprised when he found it was time to go.

As he pressed Miss Lilburne's hand at parting, he murmured, 'Six weeks and five days.'

The reference was to the wedding-day. Since that interesting date had been fixed, Mr. Chessall had never failed to remind Adelaide, every time he took leave of her at night, of the exact number of days which still intervened. He had an idea that this—or something like this—was expected of him.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning Mr. Chessall called at Mrs. Lilburne's before twelve o'clock. She was not very pleased at being called off from housekeeping cares, but disguised her annoyance admirably.

'Adelaide is out,' she said, 'walking with Miss Gray. She didn't expect you, I'm sure.'

Mr. Chessall smiled complacently at the mention of Miss Gray. Adelaide's friendship for Miss Gray amused him mightily.

'I shouldn't have come so soon,' he said, 'if I hadn't brought a piece of news. We have actually a distinguished stranger stopping at Knagford, and I thought you would like to hear about it.'

Mr. Chessall received every morning by post the 'Times' of the day before; he had brought the paper with him, and he now read an extract.

'The distinguished traveller and explorer, Dr. Wilson, has now left town, and betaken himself to the rural seclusion of Devonshire. He proposes to spend a month or two in the little village of Knagford, where he will devote himself to his forthcoming book.'

Mr. Chessall read this passage very slowly, and then looked at Mrs. Lilburne.

'It's not often that Knagford gets such a distinguished visitor,' he said. 'The papers have been full of him, you know. He had a great reception given him by the Geographical Society, and he was at the Prince's garden party, you know.'

Mrs. Lilburne replied vaguely. She was thinking how fortunate it was that she had been out the day before, when Dr. Wilson had called. For she had not cared to encourage his visits to the house five years before, and she might have been very chilly in her manner to 'the distinguished traveller and explorer' through being unaware of his social importance.

'I think I shall call on him at once,' Mr. Chessall continued. 'Now that we have got a lion, we ought to entertain him as well as we can.'

'He called here yesterday afternoon,' Mrs. Lilburne said, with some triumph in her tones.

Mr. Chessall's astonishment was evident, and Mrs. Lilburne was glad to have something to explain.

'Dr. Wilson was in practice here,' she said, 'before you came to Knagford. We knew him very well; he and George were very friendly.'

Mr. Chessall was duly impressed with this intelligence, and rose to take his leave.

'I think I shall call all the same,' he said. 'But what a pity that our picnic wasn't fixed for next week.'

Mrs. Lilburne appreciated to the full the importance of the news Mr. Chessall had brought; she set herself to scheme elaborate hospitality for the distinguished traveller. There must be a dinner party and a garden party, and perhaps another picnic—not at Kelvington Castle.

She propounded these schemes at the luncheon table, to which Adelaide had invited Miss Gray. That lady established the fame of Dr. Wilson by one clenching fact.

'His portrait was in all the illustrated papers of last week,' she said, 'and a short biography of him. But Knagford wasn't even mentioned.'

Adelaide made a public protest against her mother's schemes of entertainment.

'Why take so much trouble?' she said; 'I dare say he'd rather be quiet and write his book.'

This speech of Adelaide's roused the indignation of her younger sister.

'That's all very well for you, Adelaide,' she said; 'I suppose you prefer walking about the garden with your Augustus to anything else. You ought to think of others who are glad enough to meet a man who won't be quite as heavy and stupid as—as most of the men round Knagford are.'

When lunch was over Adelaide and Miss Gray sought the coolness and shade of the arbour in the garden. They sat together a long time in silence, till at last Adelaide broke out abruptly:

'Laura, it was here I saw him last, a month before he started on the Borneo expedition.'

Miss Gray's look expressed a sympathetic curiosity.

'He came to say good-bye,' Adelaide continued. 'I think he knew I should be alone. And he told me why he was going. The expedition was a dangerous one, but if it were successful he would gain wealth and some reputation, and then he wanted to know if—if I could give him any hope—in case——'

Miss Gray darted a look of mild reproach at her friend.

'You never told me anything about it till this morning,' she said.

'I couldn't, somehow,' Adelaide replied. 'I never mentioned it to anybody. I was very much afraid of mamma's knowing it.'

'What did you tell him?' Miss Gray asked, after a pause.

Adelaide hung down her head as she replied:

'I don't quite remember. But I think I told him that there was no one else—and that I hoped he would succeed. And I gave him two roses, one red and one white.'

'It was five years ago,' Adelaide continued, 'and I haven't seen him since. But now I am so afraid that he has come down to—to see me. If he has, it will be dreadful, for I know he is not a man who would take things quietly. If he should make a scene——'

And Miss Lilburne gave a little shiver of dismay.

Her friend hastened to reassure her.

'Very likely you are alarming yourself about nothing, Adelaide,' she said. 'Five years is a long time, and most men have very short memories.'

'But then, why has he come to Knagford?' Adelaide queried.

Miss Gray looked at her friend doubtfully.

'Tell me, Adelaide,' she said solemnly, 'did you really care for him?'

'I don't know,' Adelaide replied rapidly; 'you mustn't ask me. It was so long ago, and I was only just eighteen. Perhaps I did a little. But I wish he hadn't come down here just now. I wish that with all my heart and soul.'

'My dear child,' Miss Gray said warmly, 'don't frighten yourself unnecessarily. Dr. Wilson has very likely come down only for quiet and to write his book, as the newspapers say. He has perhaps forgotten all about what he said and felt five years ago.'

'It will be best for both of us if he has,' Adelaide replied solemnly. 'But I am afraid that——'

She let her sentence trail off into silence, and the two friends sat together for some time without speaking. Then they talked fitfully of other things, and by-and-by Miss Gray dozed and Adelaide was left to her own reflections. Miss Gray's drowsy noddings were banished by the sound of a footstep on the gravel path outside. Adelaide peered cautiously through the foliage, and then sank back in her seat, looking more than half frightened.

'It's Dr. Wilson,' she said faintly. 'Oh, Laura, you don't know how silly and timid I feel. I suppose I must see him.'

'You'll have to see him some time,' Miss Gray replied calmly. 'You may as well get over the awkwardness of the first meeting as soon as you can.'

When Adelaide got into the drawing-room she found that her mother had turned on the full flow of her affability for the benefit of the explorer of Borneo. How nice it was of him to find time to see his friends at Knagford! They had all been *so* interested in reading about him in the papers. And when would his book be ready? &c. &c.

Dr. Wilson made the appropriate replies to these effusions. He seemed very grave and a little formal, Adelaide thought. He greeted her quietly, and when she had had time to recover from her inward tremors she noticed his tint of bronze and how well it suited him.

Mrs. Lilburne, after he had left, broke into ecstasies of admiration.

'So handsome and dignified, you know. And this is his first call in Knagford. We must have George down from Plymouth and give a dinner party.'

At dinner, too, when Maud returned rather late from a tennis party, Dr. Wilson was still the theme.

'The Lamberts were talking of nothing else,' she cried. 'It

seems he is very rich as well as famous. He's got lots of shares in some new company or something. The Lamberts are very glad that he was their doctor when he was here before. Bella remembers him very well; he came when she had the mumps.'

Later on Mr. Chessall came and brought a heap of newspapers, from which he read extracts relating to the exploits of the recently returned traveller. He had also read up the article 'Borneo' in an encyclopædia, and was able to give a good deal of information about the island. Mrs. Lilburne was immensely interested. Adelaide listened almost in silence, and when taxed with being absent-minded, put forth the plea of headache.

She wandered about the garden with her lover as usual, and when they parted she received his customary enthusiasm as to the approaching day with a responsive smile. But all the time the image of the tall figure and bronzed face of the great traveller was flitting before her mental vision.

'Does he remember?' was the question that agitated her doubtful mind. And then she wondered if he had been told of her engagement to Mr. Chessall.

CHAPTER III.

ADELAIDE met Dr. Wilson several times during the next week, for Knagford was effusively hospitable to the famous traveller, and he showed himself the most amiable of lions and accepted every invitation. But at these gatherings—five o'clock teas and tennis parties and dinners—there was no opportunity of private speech. Mr. Chessall was generally by the side of his betrothed, and what was passing in Dr. Wilson's mind could only be guessed at.

But on the day after Mrs. Lilburne's dinner the expected explosion came.

Miss Gray was a district visitor, and Adelaide had accompanied her to a village about a mile and a half from Knagford. On their return they were overtaken by Dr. Wilson, who had been out fishing. His fish-basket excited Miss Gray's curiosity, and, being found empty, called forth her sarcastic powers, and conversation flowed merrily as the three journeyed together toward their respective homes. Suddenly Miss Gray stopped before a stile.

'I must call at this cottage,' she said, pointing to a picturesque wretched hovel a hundred yards off, 'to ask after a

little patient. You two can sit on the stile and talk about Borneo till I come back. I won't be long.'

She glanced significantly at Adelaide as she tripped off.

When the two were left alone a long silence ensued. Adelaide felt that the moment was critical, and her heart beat furiously. At last, to break the horrible awkwardness of the silence, she made a great effort to command her voice, and said :

'When will you finish your book, Dr. Wilson? I suppose it will be full of dreadful adventures?'

She stole a timid glance at him as she spoke, and saw that she had guessed his mood rightly; for his face wore the tragic mask, and his eyes glowed.

'Adventures? Yes,' he replied, 'plenty of them—"moving accidents by flood and field." People will read all about them by-and-by, but they will not read why it was I went out there and risked my life for speedy gains. But I suppose you know. You can't quite have forgotten those old days when I loved you so and told you of my love, and you listened and—good Heaven! I remember everything you did and said. Out in the poisonous jungle I have lain awake night after night under the stars, and conjured up your face and recalled every word and smile—and then at last I come back just in time to witness your wedding.'

Dr. Wilson was fairly launched on a sea of wild words, and the poor girl listened in terror.

'I know I've treated you badly, Ernest,' she wailed at last; 'but be generous and forgive me. Think of the scandal, of what people will say about me. Go away and leave me in peace. What have you to gain by making me miserable—just when I ought to be happiest, too, before my wedding?'

Dr. Wilson looked at her sternly.

'Your happiness!' he cried. 'Ah! if you really love that man——'

Miss Gray joined them again.

'I haven't been long, have I?' she said, looking from one to the other. 'And I hope you have learnt a lot about Borneo, Adelaide.'

She kept up the conversation vigorously, talking glibly and making inquiries about tropical heat and tropical vegetation, till they reached Mrs. Lilburne's garden gate and Adelaide left them. Then her manner suddenly changed; she became grave and silent.

‘Dr. Wilson,’ she said at last, ‘I hope I sha’n’t give you offence if I speak to you very frankly.’

He looked at her gravely, with some comprehension of her meaning.

‘Is it about——?’ he began, and then hesitated.

‘About poor Adelaide?’ she replied. ‘Yes, it is. I want you to go right away from Knagford and leave the poor girl alone. You think she has treated you badly, I know; and you’ve told her so this morning—I can see that. Let that be enough, and go away now and don’t frighten the poor child with any more useless heroics.’

‘She has told you everything, then,’ Dr. Wilson said, half-savagely.

‘I don’t know about everything,’ Miss Gray replied calmly, ‘but a good deal. I’ve no doubt you feel very bad about the business, and I’m sure I wish things had turned out differently. Your devotion is very grand and noble, and I admire it very much indeed. But I do think you are just a bit unreasonable. Five years is a very long time, you know. And then you needn’t plume yourself too much on your constancy, because you were in Borneo, it seems, nearly all the time, and I suppose the young ladies in that interesting island were not very serious rivals to poor Adelaide. However, we’ll admire you very much indeed if you’ll only go away and write your book in some other quiet village. And then you can think of her as badly as you like.’

They had reached the point where their ways parted, and Miss Gray turned off abruptly, not wishing to give him the chance of replying. But she faced round again to say quickly:

‘Remember, Dr. Wilson, I’ve had my troubles, and they’ve left me a hopeless old maid.’

The doctor’s first impulse was to be angry with Miss Gray as a meddlesome intruder, but her closing words touched him with compunction, and he only saw in her evidently well-meant interference a fresh proof of Adelaide’s weakness. She hadn’t even been able to keep his secret! He meditated much on the advice he had received, and tried to make up his mind to leave Knagford forthwith. To remain was torture—the heavy dull pain of disappointment, goaded by constant pin-pricks of momentary irritation. That eternal Mr. Chessall, with his constant thirst for miscellaneous information about ‘your wonderful discoveries in that interesting island,’ and his absurd tone of exaggerated deference. And then

to feel obliged to watch him walking or sitting with Adelaide, and to note his proud air of proprietorship; Mrs. Lilburne, too, had hit him hard once or twice. Her maternal pride over the approaching nuptials was hard to bear—she felt so pleased that dear Adelaide would not go away from Knagford—it was *such* a suitable match, and they were so much attached to each other, and she had seen it coming on for a long time before they were actually engaged, &c. &c.

Dr. Wilson's reflections drove him up to Mrs. Lilburne's on the afternoon of the next day. He was determined to see Adelaide once more alone, and then—to be guided by circumstances. One passionate appeal might yet win his cause, and if not, then he would choose some Tyrolean or Swiss mountain height, where he could work hard at his book, and where Nature's grandeur might help to make him forget feminine fickleness. He was so eager for prompt decision that he was very disappointed when he reached the cottage to find that Adelaide and her mother had gone to Plymouth for the day. The reflection that this errand had probably some relation to the approaching event was an additional exasperation.

He moved slowly away from the door, and then, led by a sudden impulse, turned towards the little arbour in the garden. He wanted to look once more at the place where he had taken his final farewell of Adelaide, five years before. It had been her favourite haunt, and he sighed profoundly as he thought of it. As he reached the entrance, he saw the place was not untenanted. A tall girl was sitting with a book before her intently reading. It was Maud Lilburne, and Dr. Wilson saw that she was not aware of his presence. He stood quite still for a few seconds watching her. Maud, with clear-cut features, seen in profile, her long lashes drooping a little, and her youthfully rounded figure bending a little forward, made a very pretty picture framed in the green of the foliage. One ray of sunlight, struggling through the leaves, lighted up the gold of her hair. Dr. Wilson gazed for a few seconds, and then a sigh betrayed him. Maud looked up and let her book fall in astonishment. But though surprised, she was not at all embarrassed to see the unexpected intruder on her solitude; there were no signs of confusion discernible behind the frank smile with which she greeted him.

‘I see you haven't forgotten your way to our arbour,’ she said. ‘The creepers have grown, and it is much better hidden than it

used to be. Do you remember,' she continued, as they strolled back towards the garden, 'helping me with my German in there? You explained to me all about the separable verbs, and when I used to write my exercises, and had to remember the rules, I always thought of you.'

'What a dreadfully dull association !' Dr. Wilson said lightly.

'Perhaps it is,' she said, 'but it is better than none. I notice that you have completely forgotten me.'

Dr. Wilson made an emphatic disclaimer, while Maud looked at him searchingly.

'Tell me,' she said, 'one single thing you can remember about me.'

Dr. Wilson hesitated for some time, and then said :

'You used to be fond of climbing trees and sitting on the branches.'

Maud blushed slightly, and then laughed.

'You might as well have forgotten that. But the last time I climbed a tree was on my twelfth birthday. Let me have some more of your reminiscences.'

'You had a little strip of garden of your own,' the doctor continued, 'and I planted a young plum-tree for you.'

'Oh, you're beginning to remember things,' Maud said brightly. 'But you are not exactly right; for there are pears growing on your plum-tree. Come and see them.'

The tour round the garden lasted only a quarter of an hour, and then Dr. Wilson walked back slowly to his inn, thinking as he went of the young lady he had just left. How beautiful she was, and how frank and unsophisticated. Smiles strayed over his face as he mentally catalogued her perfections. Then he thought of Adelaide, and became appropriately gloomy again. His visit had not settled anything after all. Then he remembered that he had promised Maud to play lawn-tennis with her at a forthcoming party, and so would be obliged to stay in Knagford for nearly another week.

CHAPTER IV.

Two days after her friendly counsel and advice to Dr. Wilson, Miss Gray left Knagford and was away about a month. When she got back her first visit was to Mrs. Lilburne's. She had a good deal

to talk about, for she had been to town and visited the Academy, and noticed the toilettes at a great garden party, and Mrs. Lilburne was curious on many points, and for an hour or two after lunch was over the conversation continued. Then Miss Gray escaped with her friend to the seclusion of the garden arbour. They sat for a little while in silence, and then Adelaide said suddenly:

‘Laura, I wish I could tell you how miserable I am.’

Miss Gray’s glance expressed her sympathy.

‘Has anything happened?’ she asked doubtfully.

‘Nothing,’ Adelaide replied; ‘but he is still in Knagford.’

‘Has he spoken to you again?’ Miss Gray demanded.

‘No,’ Adelaide replied, ‘he has not had the opportunity. I have avoided him all I could. I’ve stopped at home till people are beginning to wonder what the matter can be. He goes everywhere, and I am sure he means to see me again and to speak to me again, or he wouldn’t stop here. And I am so terribly frightened, so afraid of what he will say and do—and the wedding so close now, and Augustus always talking about the honeymoon trip. I do think I am the unhappiest girl in all England, just when——’

Adelaide could get no further; tears intervened, and sobs which she could with difficulty repress.

‘This is mere foolish excitement,’ Miss Gray said, when her friend had grown calmer; ‘you mustn’t give way to it, you mustn’t really. There is nothing to be frightened about. Dr. Wilson may feel a little hurt, but then, you know, whenever a girl marries, there’s generally some man a bit doleful over it. But men are seldom as unhappy as they think they are, and besides, you know in these days people don’t make scenes. It isn’t good form.’

‘I shall be dreadfully afraid,’ Adelaide said slowly, ‘right up to the wedding, if Dr. Wilson stops in Knagford.’

‘Then we must get him to go away,’ Miss Gray replied decisively.

Adelaide buried her face in her hands. When she looked up again her cheeks were crimson.

‘Laura,’ she said, ‘I wasn’t quite frank and truthful with you the other day. I wanted to be, but somehow I couldn’t.’

She stopped for a few seconds, and then went on hurriedly:

‘I did love him in those days. And we were engaged. He used to kiss me sometimes. And when I gave him the roses I gave him a lock of hair too. And there were more things I said

—if he were to remind me of them I know I shouldn't be able to bear it. And yet—yet—I don't want him to go away without my seeing him.'

Miss Gray looked at her friend in silence. She was hurt by the previous want of confidence, and now she realised the full importance of Adelaide's confession.

'The wedding-dress came in this morning from Plymouth,' the other said suddenly, 'but they sha'n't induce me to try it on.'

'Adelaide,' Miss Gray replied solemnly, 'all this is very serious. You ought to have told me all this before. But I really think that you oughtn't to marry Mr. Chessall, feeling as you do. And yet now the wedding is so near——'

'You must find some excuse for putting it off, Laura,' the other cried vehemently; 'you must indeed.'

Miss Gray was very thoughtful as she walked home.

'Poor Adelaide,' she sighed, 'she has had a great deal to go through in these last days. But things will come off all right, I expect. There will be an explosion, and then the great Augustus Chessall will go on his tour by himself. If he hadn't been so dreadfully tedious, things might have turned out differently.'

Meantime Adelaide was still sitting in the arbour, thinking of many things. 'How will it all end?' was the question which circled round and round in her mind. By-and-by her imagination began to paint the ending she secretly wished for. Only within the last few days had she admitted even to herself what her heart really prompted; now that she had spoken to her friend, her ideas became more definite, and she could surrender herself to visions of a future in which Augustus Chessall had no part.

She was roused from her reverie by voices in the garden. She recognised her sister's lively staccato, and then, with an inward tremor, Dr. Wilson's deeper tones. Soon they came nearer, and Adelaide could hear what they were saying.

'You'll be back for the wedding,' Maud said; 'I shall be dreadfully disappointed if you are not.'

Dr. Wilson laughed.

'You want me to see you as bridesmaid,' he said. 'What vanity! But I'll be back before then. I don't think I could stop away from you if I tried.'

'And it is only a month since you discovered me in there,' Maud replied, nodding towards the arbour, 'You hardly spoke to me before.'

'I think I've made up since for the few days I lost,' he replied with a laugh. 'I dare say the gossips of Knagford are already beginning to talk about us.'

'Let them,' Maud replied scornfully, 'the silly things!'

'We sha'n't have to keep our secret very long,' Dr. Wilson said; 'just till your sister's wedding is over. Then I'll ask your mamma's consent, and I hope I shall get it.'

'Oh, there's no fear about that,' Maud replied frankly. 'You are a great man, you know, Ernest, and a very eligible son-in-law.'

All this the poor listener in the arbour plainly heard, and then a brief space of blessed oblivion blotted out all further sense of sound. It was but for a moment; slowly and quietly the consciousness of outside objects returned, and the memory of what had happened. The two were still talking in the garden, but they had moved further off, and their tones were low and indistinct. Peering through the leaves, Adelaide could see that they were facing each other, and that he was holding both her hands. Sinking back in her seat, she strained her ears to catch the light susurrus of tender tones. For some time the low babble lasted; then came a moment's silence, followed by a light, silvery laugh; the lovers were parting, and had kissed. Adelaide listened to the doctor's retreating footsteps grinding on the gravel of the garden path, and then heard the door close behind her sister.

The poor girl did not stir from her place. An hour passed, and evening came on, but she sat motionless, gazing blankly into the gathering twilight. Not a muscle of her face moved, not a tear dropped as the tumult in her mind rolled on, as the grey perspective of what must be obliterated presented itself to her.

Footsteps passed outside, but she hardly heard them; it was not till Mr. Chessall stood at the entrance that she roused herself from her long reverie.

'Adelaide!' he exclaimed, 'why are you sitting here alone in the dark? They told me you were at Miss Gray's. Is anything the matter?'

She moved a little to make room for him by her side.

'Don't let us go in just yet, dear,' she said; 'it's so pleasant out here. I don't think I ever knew the roses to smell so sweet.'

And she touched his hand with the tips of her fingers caressingly. Mr. Chessall was delighted with this prospect of a *tête-à-tête*. It seemed so appropriate to the circumstances. And Mrs. Lilburne would scold him gently for stopping out, which was also in

harmony with the situation. He talked of the balmy night, of the roses, and of the moon, a tiny circlet which he had noticed as he came in, while Adelaide let her hand rest in his and listened.

'The day is very near,' he whispered, becoming more tender; 'very near now. In a fortnight's time—just a fortnight to-day—we shall be at Lucerne. I imagine we shall be out on the lake, gazing at the summit of the Rigi, if that point is visible from the water. But on a still summer night, out on the water floating—alone—we two——'

Adelaide rose to her feet, disengaging her hand.

'I feel a little chilly,' she said. 'I think we had better go in.'

At her lover's suggestion they made one turn of the garden first. Adelaide was silent and unresponsive, but just as they were entering the house she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. Mr. Chessall was not used to such outbursts, and he was almost as much surprised as delighted. When they got in, Maud was telling her mother of the afternoon's tennis. She had played three sets with Dr. Wilson as her partner, and had won them all. Adelaide looked at her sister and saw her happiness beaming on her face. Mr. Chessall produced a packet.

'Adelaide,' he said, 'these are patterns of wall-papers for the little sitting-room; you must choose one. We shall generally be sitting there, you know, through the long winter evenings,' he added, dropping his voice; 'we mustn't have an ugly pattern always staring us in the face.'

Adelaide sighed faintly.

'To-morrow, Augustus,' she said, 'I'll choose wall-papers or do anything you like—to-morrow, but not to-night. I am tired and nervous to-night.'

When the time came for Mr. Chessall's going, Adelaide wrote hurriedly a short note.

'I want you to leave this at Miss Gray's, Augustus,' she said.

'Miss Gray!' he exclaimed. 'I really shall begin to be jealous of Miss Gray.'

'I want her to be here to-morrow,' Adelaide said calmly, 'when we are trying on—a new dress.'

'Oh! the wedding-dress,' Maud exclaimed. 'What fun! I didn't know it was come.'

Mr. Chessall darted a rapturous glance at his betrothed.

'I suppose I mustn't see it till the auspicious day arrives,' he said.

Adelaide threw a shawl over her shoulders and accompanied him to the garden-gate.

When she was gone Maud broke out suddenly :

‘Mamma, why does Adelaide look so unhappy?’

‘Unhappy, child!’ Mrs. Lilburne replied; ‘what nonsense you talk! I should be the first to see the signs of unhappiness if there were any.’

Mrs. Lilburne stopped a minute, and then added :

‘Girls are often a little low-spirited just before they are going to be married and leave their old home for good and all. It’s only natural, I’m sure.’

Maud considered this proposition carefully in the recesses of her young mind, and found it quite incredible.

‘I dare say Adelaide’s right enough,’ she thought, ‘though she looks a little sad. I should be dismal, I know, if I were going to marry Augustus Chessall, Esquire, and live in this dull place, and listen to all his long stories over and over again. But then I suppose Adelaide’s very much in love with him, and doesn’t see his faults at all.’

LAST WILLS AND TESTAMENTS.

'LONG life to the man who makes his own will!' So say the lawyers, most sincerely, feeling sure that a home-made testament will some day afford them plenty of work and numerous fees. But though it be dangerous for a man to make his own will without legal assistance, yet it is not safe for him to omit making it altogether; unless, indeed, he is content to leave it to the Law to dispose of his estate according to its very just and equitable codes. Yet, if he has any special wishes as to the disposition of his estate, it will be wise of him to prepare a special document setting them forth; and it will also be wise to execute this document as soon as he possesses any property of which he can so dispose.

There was, some five or six centuries ago, a fundamental difference between a Testament and a Will, into which I need not enter here, as in this paper I shall use the two terms indifferently. Testaments and wills are productions of civilised life; no such documents are known in the earliest days of any nation. Even among the Romans, whose law has remained as a model and basis for our own, the practice of making wills only grew up after centuries of civil life. They had no law of primogeniture, though it is supposed in most cases where the father had owned land some private arrangement was made among the sons by which the eldest became heir or successor. A daughter had no claim whatever on her father's estate, and a married woman was no longer one of her father's family, but of that of her husband.

When the custom of making wills grew up among the Romans a father could regulate the succession of his sons by testament. Dr. Muirhead, Professor of Roman Law in the University of Edinburgh, says that 'Patrician Rome had two varieties of testament—that made . . . under advice of the College of Pontiffs, and that made by soldiers in the hearing of a few comrades on the eve of battle.'¹ . . . Both still remained in use in the early republic;

¹ Called a *nuncupative* will, 'from the word *nuncupatio*, a term of the civil law, originally used to express the declaration of the testator's intentions, whether the testament was written or not; but later usage appropriated the term "nuncupative" to testaments where there was no written will, and where the testator declared his wishes orally.'—R. R. Sharpe, *Cal. of Wills, &c.* 'Nuncupare est palam nominare.'—*Gaius*.

but were in course of time displaced by the general adoption of that executed with the copper and scales (*testamentum per aes et libram*).

This curious expression, *with the copper and scales*, takes us back to the earliest and most barbarous ages of Rome, to the time when a man bought his wife as he bought his goods and chattels: It reminds us that there was a time when coin was not used in barter, but metal was weighed in exchange for commodities. This method of purchase has left its traces in our word *pound* of money, and in the French *livre*, and in their equivalents in other tongues. In the old Roman days, when a man bought land, food, or what not, he weighed out the price in copper; later on, when the primæval practice of taking a wife by forcibly carrying a woman away from her family had yielded among the patricians to the custom of buying her, the bridegroom purchased her, like other things, by *copper and scales*; the next step, according to Dr. Muirhead, was the adoption of this method of marriage by the plebeians. 'The scales, the *libripens*, and the five witnesses were all there; but as there was no real price to be paid, the only copper that was needed was a single *raudusculum*.' This form of purchase reminds us of the nominal rent among ourselves of a peppercorn; and of such curious tenures as the famous Caistor gadwhip, and the roses in other places. The testaments made on the eve of battle or before the College of Pontiffs 'were in course of time replaced by the general adoption of that executed with the copper and scales,' which kind of will is sometimes represented as a written instrument, but is supposed by Dr. Muirhead not to have been a testament but a makeshift for one. The 'copper and the scales' lingered on as a legal term, but had no longer an actual existence; much as the red adhesive wafer affixed to a modern lease only represents the wax seal of former times.

We find that the next stage in the history of the testament was 'marked by the introduction of tablets in which the testamentary provisions were set out in writing;' and to make this kind of will valid the copper and the scales were still introduced. After the testator had declared to his witnesses that the tablets contained his testament, they were 'sealed by testator, officials, and witnesses, the seals being on the outside, and over the cord with which the tablets were tied.' Thus we perceive that the witnesses sealed, but did not sign, the testator's tablets. In the case of the will made on the eve of battle neither testator nor

witnesses could sign or seal; the whole affair was merely verbal. It was the *intention* of the testator to which the witnesses bore testimony; and the *intention* of the testator is that which the law seeks to carry out, now as then. So Professor Lorimer, in his 'Handbook of the Law of Scotland,' remarks: 'Whatever can be positively ascertained to have been the wish of the deceased with reference to . . . his property, will be carried into effect, provided that they are neither inconsistent with public law, immoral, insane, nor impossible. The will of a fool being thus valid, and that of a madman invalid, many of the difficulties which arise in judging of the validity of wills are occasioned by the uncertainty of the line which divides folly from madness.' It was laid down, somewhat satirically, by a Scottish judge that 'a testament does not require the same degree of mind as in making a bargain; it is sufficient if the party be capable of judging of each part as it is presented to him.'

A man's will naturally is of vital interest to his heirs and successors; but it may concern many others beyond that small circle. It may be an historic record of the state of the country and of the Church at the time when it is made; it may throw light on religious and civil customs likely to pass away; it may show the real character of the testator and of his contemporaries. Indeed, the learned Surtees Society has thought it well to devote much time and labour to the subject of early *wills and inventories*; and from the volumes published by that Society I draw much of my information.

The will of William de Karileph, Bishop of Durham, founder of the present Cathedral, who died in 1095: he left with his will an inventory of the books which he bequeathed to the Church. Flambard, Pudsey, Poor, and other Bishops of Durham did the same. These wills were entirely in Latin, as were at that time those of lay people, men and women. Most of them contain provision for Masses for the repose of the souls of the testators. As we come down the centuries the documents grow more interesting; English is used in codicils and interspersed with the Latin of the lawyers. Matilda, Lady of Dalden, wife of Sir William Bowes, Knight, bequeathed to one of her god-daughters 'j romance boke is called ye gospelles.' Why she called the Gospels a 'romance-book' is an undecided question. To another lady she left 'unum librum yat is called Trystram,' the *Sir Tristram* of Thomas the Rhymer, indubitably a romance. The will of John Trollop, Esq.,

of Thornley, was witnessed by Lionel de Claxton, who when young was a schoolboy at Durham. He had a fight with a schoolfellow in the Abbey churchyard, and one side or the other sustained a damaged nose; it became necessary to reconsecrate the churchyard, which had been desecrated by the shedding of blood!

The will of John Bancks, 'laboringe man,' 1542, disposes of more than three acres and cow; his body is to be buried in the church of Gateshead, 'with all the prests and clerks therto belonging.' To his son George he leaves two houses, to his son Thomas another house, to Margerye his daughter six sheep; there are also other bequests. The special bequests of cloaks, caps, kirtles, gowns &c. in the sixteenth century indicate that clothing must have been far more valuable and more durable then than now. An inventory of the goods of Richard Swinborne shows that he died possessed of twenty pounds in gold, two chests, two pair of tongs, two daggers, one sword, with certain tackett nails, one hammer, and his raiment; a curious list of goods and chattels.

John de Warene, eighth and last Earl of Surrey of his family, left a will in the French language; it is a valuable document in the eyes of antiquaries; one remarkable bequest is that to his son William of 'ma bible que j'ai fait faire en Fraunceys.' Provision is generally made in these ancient wills for candles to burn on the day of the testator's funeral, or at other times during High Mass. Roger de Fauconberg, 1391, orders 'pro luminare circa corpus meum, die sepulturæ meæ, v tapers continentes quilibet iiij libras ceræ.' Margery, widow of Sir William de Aldeburgh, in her will dated 1591, leaves to her late husband's old nurse a scarlet gown set with fur. Sir William Mowbray, of Colton, desires that one taper shall be 'entour mon corps, saunz plus lune . . . ou aucun autre vaynglory entour mon vile corps.' The mixture of English which alloys these testaments, composed mainly in old French, makes them very quaint and curious. John of Eston of Scardlburgh leaves 2*d*. 'pro pulsacione campanarum et le belman portand' campanum,' &c. Nicholas de Schiebrun mentions 'unam cistam de fir, ferro ligatum, et unum er pyk'—that is to say, 'one chest of fir wood, bound with iron, and one ear-pick.' John Croxton of Yorke, chaundler, composed his will entirely in English; he is lavish of wax candles to be burnt on the day of his funeral, and also gives 'an ymage of iiij pund of wax & xxiiij lb. of wax to the segirstane¹ to the fynding of the hegh

¹ I presume, *saoristan*.

auter.' Even in death he sought to benefit his own trade. John Fairfax, Rector of Prestcote, ordered a public dinner to celebrate his burying: six oxen, twenty sheep, six quarters of wheat, and ten of malt, were to be provided. Scales, if not copper, were here needed on a large scale, if I may be allowed to say so.

I have spoken above of the verbal wills made by Roman soldiers on the eve of battle: the Surtees Society prints entire a will made by Sir Ralph Newmarche of Whatton, Notts, and of Bentley, Yorks, on the battlefield of Shrewsbury, probably, as the learned editor suggests, after he had received his fatal wound. It is in Latin, but in English would run thus: 'In the name of God, Amen. 22nd day of July, 1403,¹ I, Ralph Newmarche, Knight, of Whatton, make my nuncupative will in this manner. First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, Blessed Mary, and all the Saints, and my body to ecclesiastical sepulture. I leave all my goods to Elizabeth my wife, and to pay my debts, and to provide for the welfare of my soul. I also constitute Elizabeth my wife my executrix. Given at Salop the above-named day and year.' Another very touching document is the will of William Manning, dated from the leper-house of Monkbridge in York: he gives half a pound of wax to be burnt at his funeral, sixpence to the works going on in York Minster, sixpence to the Monks of Knaresborough, and the residue to his wife. In 1442, John Pudsey, a tradesman, made a short will; in it he left to 'Thomæ Hirste, skynner, arcum meum cum le grene balt, et vij sagittas pacock-federde.' No doubt peacock-feathered arrows were much esteemed in those days. And women's dress must have been more highly thought of than it is now, for the female testators always name their garments; as, for instance, Agnes Selby, in 1464, leaves a black gown and a green one to Agnes Hastings, and her second-best green gown to Joan Hastings. And yet, oddly enough, it appears from a clause in the will of Sir John Scrope, fourth Lord Scrope of Masham and Upsal, 'that the Parliament robe of a peer became, upon his death, the perquisite of his servants, and that if his family wished to retain it, money was to be paid for its redemption.'

Towards the end of the sixteenth century wills were no longer drawn up in Latin, but in English; no doubt when the Latin language gave way to the vernacular in the services of the Church it did the same in legal documents. William Preston, 1581,

¹ The battle was fought on July 20, 1403.

enumerates his 'blacke clocke lynned with bayes,' his 'payre of grograyne brichis,' his 'blacke dobleat of Doche fostyone,' his 'rosset breches of brod-cloth,' his 'payre of knyte hose,' and 'all his showes,' as well as his 'bookes ledar gloves;' these, and some other articles of wearing apparel, are left as bequests. The great number of horses belonging to some of the testators whose wills are before me is very remarkable. William Emerson, 1584, possessed at his death seven horses and mares; Ralph Richeson, 1585, had seven; William Grey, miller, 1585, four; Nicholas Ridley, 1586, five. In days when all travelling was done on horseback the stables of ordinary middle-class persons must have been well filled with *naggies* and *meares*: Richard Briscoe left seventeen. The value of such animals seems to have varied from 1*l.* to 15*l.* 'An old angell' was a frequent legacy, often said to be 'as a token.'

When we come to the subject of curious clauses in wills, we find a sort of grim humour connected with the prospect of death and the last offices of religion. One Thomas Broke, landowner, 1417, desired to be buried without coffin or lid, but only in a 'grete clothe'—this by way of humility. Lady Peryne Clanbowe, 1422, gives to Elizabeth Joye a 'booke of Englyssh cleped "Poor Caytife,"' which book was a collection of tracts against abuses in the Church of Rome. Sir Roger Salwyn, Knight, of York, 1420, says: 'I will that som goode man be ordeine to goo for to Iherusalem in pilgremage and as far as is cost is less than C li in commyng and goyng;' this is for the good of the testator's soul, and gives one a glimpse of the tourist of the fifteenth century. William Newland, of London and Normandy, 1425, desires 'a man to be found to go to Rome and to Jerusalem,' another to go from the *Sword* in Fleet Street unto Canterbury barefoot, another to ride or go unto St. Michael's Mount, and another to St. James of Compostella; their expenses to be paid. The pilgrim who went barefoot must have envied the other three. Richard Bokeland, London, 1436, left money that a million Masses might be said for his soul. If said at the rate of one a day they would extend over three thousand years; if at the rate of three a day, which would be a tolerably rapid progress, they should now have still more than six hundred years to run! The above curious clauses are gleaned from Mr. F. J. Furnivall's 'Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate.'

In a volume entitled 'Wills from Doctors' Commons' are

printed the testaments of some noted persons. One is that of Sir Hugh Myddelton, 1631, and deals chiefly with his property in the New River Waterworks. The only humorous clause is this: 'I give and bequeath to all my men servants (except the boy in kitchin) five pounds each;' the said boy is to have 'fortie shillings.' Sir Henry Vic, of Guernsey, 1669, leaves 3*l.* to his boy Robert Browne. The will of Elizabeth, daughter of James I. and wife of Frederick V., Prince of the Palatinate, has a painful interest. She urged her husband to put himself at the head of the Protestant princes; he was elected king by the Bohemians, who were aiming at the downfall of the Emperor Ferdinand II. This document, dated 1661, is in French, and couched in the first person plural, with such awkward expressions as 'à ma fille nous donnons;' the unhappy Queen appears to have had little to dispose of beyond her personal jewels. Speaker Lenthall wishes to be buried under a 'plain stone with this superscription only, *Vermis sum.*' This, surely, was conscious humour, though, perhaps *worms*—not a *worm*—would have been more appropriate a short time after his interment. Richard Baxter, the author of the 'Saints' Rest,' in his testament of 1689, leaves money to be spent on 'flannen wascoats' for poor Londoners.

In those large volumes entitled 'Calendar of Wills proved and enrolled in the Court of Husting, London,' edited by Reginald R. Sharpe, D.C.L., we find some very curious facts scattered through an enormous mass of information without much interest for the ordinary reader except as regards the editor's foot-notes; a few of these plums I have picked out from the indigestible dough in which they are embedded. I know that Dr. Sharpe will pardon my irreverence towards his splendid work. The wills of which he prints abstracts were enrolled between the years 1258 and 1685; and he says in his introduction that those of the years 1348–9 far exceed in number those of any other years, owing, in all probability, to the awful plague, known as the Black Death, which at that time ravaged all Northern Europe. Whole families were swept away together. The will of Nicholas de Barton mentions his wife Alice, but before the will was proved she too was dead. Benedict, son and executor to his father Richard de Shordich, died before the probate was granted; Thomas Fraunceys makes certain bequests to Agnes his wife, but her will closely follows his on the roll; and the wills of Richard de Stokwell and Hugh his son were proved on the same day. Occasionally a will was enrolled during

the testator's lifetime; for Richard de Stratford and William Kelwedon brought their wills into court for the purpose of probate.

John de Kyrkeby, Bishop of Ely, 1290, bequeathed 'to the bishopric of Ely all his houses at Holeburne in the suburb of London, together with vines, gardens, and other appurtenances, in pure and perpetual alms.' Dr. Sharpe says, in a note, that the 'gardens' are now known as Ely Place; and that 'the gardens attached to the bishop's palace, which survive only in the name of Hatton Garden, were a characteristic feature of the neighbourhood.' He then quotes the well-known passage from Shakespeare's *Richard III.*, act iii. scene iv., and adds: 'Vine Street still bears witness to the Bishop's vineyard, as Kirby Street still recalls the Bishop's name.'

About the beginning of the fourteenth century 'London Bridge' appears often as a legatee, citizens leaving money for the building works there going on. Margery Bachelier gives her gold wedding-ring to London Bridge!

Walter le Taillour de Alegate devised 'to Richard his son the reversion of a tenement held by Richard le Bakere for life, receiving yearly, immediately after the testator's death, a rent of half a mark, and weekly one penitourte in respect of the said tenement.' The penitourte was a penny tart!

William de Elsingg, mercer, left tenements and rents to build and endow a hospital for the poor of both sexes, 1348. This foundation was first known as Elsing Spittle, and afterwards as Sion College. It had been established by the testator during his life with a *custos* and four secular priests, but he had changed the secular canons for canons regular of the Order of St. Augustin, the Bishop of London adding one to their number. Among the innumerable 'pious uses' for which provision is made in all wills before the Reformation, we find this by William de Rothyng, merchant, 1349: 'To the Hospital of St. Thomas in Suthwerk an annual quitrent for the maintenance of a lamp to burn by night among the weak and sickly there housed.' Not a few wealthy citizens left money to anchorites (Richard de Walsted, 1365, left bequests to the anchoresses, i.e. female anchorites of London), and hermits living within the boundaries of London. John de Holegh, hosier, 1351-2, left an immense number of pious bequests—to orphans, to pilgrims, to lepers, to anchorites; to every one going with naked feet to offer a penny at the shrine of

Blessed Mary of Walsyngham ; for an image of St. Mary, and a crown for it ; and for a copy of his testament to be written in a missal to be used at the high altar of St. Mary-le-Bow. One Johanna Cros desires that eleven thousand *Paternosters* and so many *Aves* be said in honour of the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne, of whom it is recorded, says Dr. Sharpe, that relics were found in the cross of the belfry of St. Paul's in 1313-14.

About this time Londoners began to mention gifts of books in their wills ; and Simon Bristowe, clerk, 1374, leaves his portifory with music lying in quires to the church of St. Mary Aldermanbury. John de Kenyngton, Rector of St. Dunstan's towards the Tower, left a book of the Epistles to that church, and also money to buy books. But we find little encouragement given in these early times to literature or learning. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1557, Thomas Lewen, ironmonger, directs that the sum of five pounds shall be divided between two poor scholars, one to be of Oxford and the other of Cambridge ; and Dr. Sharpe adds in a note that 'the sum of 15*l.* is now paid yearly to each of the exhibitioners, instead of 2*l.* 10*s.*' During the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII. bequests for 'pious uses' become rare, and the last of such bequests is made by John Watson, brewer, 1544. Candles, Masses, and trentals¹ have disappeared from wills, and companies (no longer called guilds), hospitals, scholars, and prisoners appear more frequently as legatees. The will of Sir Thomas Gresham, mercer, 1579, indicates the estimation in which the new learning was held in Elizabeth's reign ; he provides that lectures shall be read on divinity, astronomy, music, geometry, law, physic, and rhetoric. 'None to be chosen to read lectures so long as he be married.' The Gresham Lectures are still a power in the land ; I do not know whether the lecturers are at this day exclusively bachelors and widowers !

In 1585, Edmund Bragge, haberdasher, being *in extremis*, made a nuncupative will. 'Upon Roger his son asking him, "What will you geve my mother?" meaning Elizabeth, wife of the testator, he then and there replied : "I have saide already three-score poundes a yeare yf my lande will soe farre extende, she to be owner of the lande." And the aforesaid Elizabeth then asked : "What will you give your sonne Edward?" to which the testator replied : "I will geve him thirtie poundes a yeare. I can geve him noe lesse."' I quote this in full as a specimen of a nuncupa-

¹ Thirty Masses.

tive will, whether made by a Roman soldier on the eve of battle or by a citizen of London on his deathbed.¹

Strange and eccentric bequests are seldom found in early wills, which mostly bear a strong family likeness. But I may mention that John Northampton, draper, 1397, left to the Carthusian monks of London each half a pound of ginger; and, every Lent, a pound of dates, a pound of figs, and a pound of raisins. Our modern young Carthusians would be pleased if the legacy extended to them.

Some curious actions concerning wills are recorded in Shaw's 'Digest of Cases.' 'A deed of settlement by a man seventy-seven years old, who could not read writing, in favour of his agent, which was scrolled by the agent without any evidence of instructions, and not read over and not delivered to the grantee, but retained by the agent till the grantee's death,' was 'set aside.' This seems to have been a case in which the grantee's imbecility was only equalled by the agent's roguery. Shaw mentions a 'question as to the construction of a clause bequeathing to a lady who resided with the testator "the whole of the furniture in her own room and any other she may choose."' Might she not choose every bit of furniture in the house? The words were held to be 'limited to a power of choosing liberally, but fairly, any other articles of similar extent and value with the furniture of her own bedroom.' That interpretation seems to have been suggested by common sense; but what uncommon sense was it which suggested 'a direction by an uncle in a deed of settlement, to trustees, that they should pay certain sums to his nephew (who was his heir *alioqui successurus*) on condition that he should not reside in the same house with his mother.' Yet this strange condition was 'held to be lawful.'

The famous Thellusson Will Case is, perhaps, the most extraordinary legal action dealing with a testamentary document which has ever come before the English public. One Peter Thellusson, a native of Geneva, settled in London as a merchant and acquired an enormous fortune. He died in 1797 at Plaistow, in Kent, leaving to his widow and six children about 100,000*l.* There was also some 600,000*l.* which he left to trustees to invest; this sum

¹ 'The setting up of nuncupative wills became so often associated with fraud that the Legislature interposed, and such wills were practically abolished by the stringent provisions enacted with respect to them by the Statute of Frauds (29 Car. II. c. 3).'-R. B. Sharpe, *Cal. of Wills, &c.*

was to accumulate during the lives of his three sons and of all his grandsons ; and then the result of this scheme was to become the property of the eldest male descendant of his three sons, with benefit of survivorship. This will was established by decree of the House of Lords in 1805. All went quietly until the testator's last grandson died in 1856. Then the question arose as to whether the eldest male descendant, or the male descendant of the eldest son, should inherit. After three years the House of Lords decided for the latter. It is said that the legal expenses attending the dispute brought the property down to about its original value. An Act of Parliament was passed to prevent a testator from leaving his property to accumulate during more than twenty-one years after his death. This Act was passed in the year 1800, and is commonly known as the Thellusson Act.

A cursory glance at mediæval wills shows that but a few baptismal names were in use among the men of those days. John, Roger, William, Richard, Nicholas recur again and again with extraordinary monotony ; but the female names present a bewildering variety. From them I select, for the consideration of parents and sponsors, a few of the more remarkable : Cryna, Gunnora, Hodierna, Tiffania, Slymina, Lenota, Orabilia, Goldcorn, Idonea, Milsenda, Helewysia, Chera, Celestria, Roesia, Freschessaunchia.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

DOUGLAS PAYS A FRIENDLY CALL.

DOUGLAS COLBORNE had been more surprised than displeased by the receipt of the telegram which announced his cousin's sudden return to England and requested a week's hospitality. Having been informed of Lady Florence Carey's engagement to Lord Galashiels, he had, of course, guessed at once what had caused the young man to change his plans, and although he did not believe that Frank would gain anything by a desperate appeal to the constancy of a girl who had been certain from the first to prove inconstant, he was willing to grant him any opportunity of making such an appeal that proximity might afford. Moreover, he himself was feeling very dull and lonely; for his mother and his sister, who had been staying with him during the summer, had now departed on a round of visits, and, for various reasons, he had not cared to invite anybody else to occupy the vacant rooms which his housemaids had ceased to dust or sweep. He would not have dreamt of asking Frank to come and keep him company; still he was not sorry that Frank's personal inclinations should have prompted him to adopt that course.

Frank, when he arrived, was portentously mysterious, alleging that he had 'one or two things to do' which had necessitated his journey, but that he would in all probability set out for Italy once more in a few days, and disclaiming with an earnestness which would not have deceived an infant any object in visiting Buckinghamshire save that rendered imperative upon him by considerations of gratitude and the ties of relationship. As, however, he was not questioned, (which was rather provoking), and as his temperament was the reverse of secretive, he had not been many hours under Douglas's roof before he had to all intents and purposes divulged his true errand.

'I know nothing at all about it,' his host said, in reply to

certain leading observations which were made after dinner; 'all I have heard is that Lord Galashiels and Lady Florence are to be married before the end of the year. If you want to hear more, you had better apply at head-quarters, hadn't you? Not that I should advise you to do anything of the sort; because I don't see what more there is to be heard—to any purpose. Do as you like, though; it's your affair, not mine. You will end, most likely, in coming round to my opinion that women aren't worth a tenth part of the bother that we give ourselves about them.'

'Some women are worth nothing at all; but it's absurd to condemn them in the lump, as you do,' answered Frank, with equal veracity and sagacity. 'I'm not prepared to say,' he continued, 'whether I shall apply at head-quarters for further information about Lady Florence's engagement—supposing that there really is an engagement. I may or I may not. But there are worse plans than applying at head-quarters, and, between you and me, I doubt whether you would regret it if you were to give that plan a trial.'

He then related how he had chanced to fall in with the Countess Radna at Bellaggio and how her language and demeanour had convinced him that she was by no means irreconcilable. Naturally, he failed to convey a similar impression to his cousin by the delivery of the only message which she had been pleased to send to him; and Douglas, after this had been duly communicated to him, merely remarked:

'It was quite unnecessary for her to say that; I never for one moment imagined that she had authorised the Baroness von Bickenbach to write to me and I didn't attach the slightest importance to the letter. I take it that my wife, who isn't a child, knows her own mind. It is possible, though I don't think it is probable, that she would like me to eat humble pie once more; but I have done so once, and once is enough. Please don't set me down as an unmannerly brute if I beg you to drop the subject.'

Frank said no more—being, indeed, provided with other subjects of a more engrossing and urgent character to think about—but Douglas was angered and irritated beneath his assumed composure, and during the whole of the following day he had much ado to restrain himself from speaking snappishly to the various persons with whom he was brought into contact. 'Why can't she let me alone!' he kept saying to himself. 'We are separated by her own wish; I haven't attempted to interfere with her in any

way since she left me, and surely she might be magnanimous enough to return the compliment! But magnanimity isn't included in the list of her virtues.'

The list of her virtues, had it been drawn up at this time by him, would in truth have proved a remarkably short one. Nothing is more easy or more common than to fall in love with a woman whose conspicuous virtues are few in number; but nothing is more difficult than to remain in love with one to whom certain good qualities have been mistakenly ascribed; and this was Douglas Colborne's present case. He had unquestionably made a mistake; his wife had proved—she had even, apparently, taken some trouble to prove—to him that she was not what he had imagined her to be. Perhaps she was not to blame for his vain imaginings; yet he could not acquit her of all blame in the matter, nor had he been able to think of any adequate reply to Loo, who, during her sojourn at Stoke Leighton, had more than once lamented openly and unblushingly that he should have gone so far afield in search of a wife, when a lady who would have made an admirable wife for him in all respects might have been found within an easy walk of his home. He had allowed Loo to make speeches of that kind because they had not been as disagreeable to him as, possibly, they ought to have been; he had likewise allowed her to put an end to an estrangement to which no spoken allusion had been made, and he was now once more upon friendly terms with Peggy Rowley, although their old intimacy could hardly be said to have been renewed.

Thus it suggested itself to him almost in the light of a duty, on the morning when Frank Innes, without stating whither he was bound, started off to meet Lady Florence Carey in a country churchyard, that he should ride over to Swinford Manor and hold a consultation with one of Frank's most trusted friends and advisers. Obviously the young man meditated some foolish proceeding or other, and obviously it behoved those who were interested in him to ascertain what notion he had taken into his head. So Douglas, after disposing of a solitary luncheon, ordered his horse and trotted over highways and byways to his neighbour's residence.

He was incorrect in his surmise that Frank had visited her on the previous day, and it was neither with him nor with his cousin that her attention was occupied when he hooked his hunting-crop into the handle of her door-bell. Miss Rowley was at home, the

butler said, but he believed she was out in the garden; and it was only after a delay of five minutes that Mr. Colborne was requested to be so kind as to join her there. He found her deep in conversation with her head-gardener, who touched his hat, on the advent of the new-comer, without pausing in a harangue upon the ravages of black fly, while Peggy merely held out her hand and did not turn her head.

‘That is all very fine,’ said she, when Peter had made an end of speaking; ‘but the upshot of it seems to be that other people can grow chrysanthemums as they ought to be grown and that we can’t. Is black fly unknown at Lord Burcote’s place?’

Then she turned to her visitor and appealed to him, as an impartial observer, to say whether it wasn’t too bad. ‘Peter chooses to sneer at Lord Burcote’s single stems; but he is obliged to admit that Lord Burcote’s man has succeeded where he has failed. I’ll trouble you just to look at that *Mrs. Alpheus Hardy!*—and at that *Louis Boehmer!* Did you ever see such specimens?’

‘I’m no judge,’ answered Douglas, laughing. ‘Comparing your chrysanthemums with my own, I should have said that you had every prospect of a magnificent show; but I daresay the Burcote establishment produces some troublesome growths. It has produced one which is not unlikely to give me trouble, I know! In point of fact, I came here to talk to you about her, and I shall be thankful to be reassured, if you can reassure me, when you have done pointing the finger of scorn at your flower-pots.’

Peter Chervil shot a sharp side-glance at the speaker; but Peggy’s countenance expressed nothing but innocence and interrogation. She continued to make trenchant criticisms and issue orders for some little time; but eventually she motioned to her visitor to follow her towards the house and invited him to explain his errand.

‘If you have come to rebuke me about Florence Carey’s engagement, you have come to the wrong place,’ said she. ‘I have done all I could to prevent it; but I couldn’t do anything worth speaking of, and I knew from the first what the end of it all would be. When you write to your cousin, you may tell him from me that he has only himself to thank. I don’t suppose there was ever much chance for him; but he might have had a try, instead of bolting out of the country and leaving things to take their course.’

‘Frank has come home,’ answered Douglas; ‘I thought he must have been to see you yesterday. Anyhow, I am pretty sure

that he has gone to see Lady Florence today, and I wish he hadn't! I have no wish to rebuke you, or anybody else, about the girl's engagement; on the contrary, she is welcome, so far as I am concerned, to marry whom she pleases, except Frank. But I'm rather uneasy about him. I can't make out what he is after, and I was in hopes that you might be able to enlighten me.'

'Oh, he has come back, has he?' said Peggy. 'No; I can't throw any light upon his intentions. He hasn't had the impudence to impart them to me, I am glad to say, and I should have refused to listen to him if he had attempted anything of the sort. At the same time, I am free to confess that nothing would delight me more than to hear of his having cut out Lord Galashiels and snatched Florry away from the clutches of that unnatural old mother of hers.'

'How could he do that?'

'I'm not saying that he can or that he will; only, as you are sure that he has gone to see Florry, it seems probable that he has some object in view, and it doesn't seem very probable that his object in travelling all this distance was to congratulate her.'

'That's just it,' observed Douglas meditatively.

Peggy looked at him and laughed. After a short interval of silence, she said: 'I don't think there is any great need for you to distress yourself; Florry is too much cowed by Lady Burcote to break out into open rebellion, and Mr. Innes is—well, he isn't as rash as I should like him to be. So it will be all right, and he will return to his musical studies presently, and you will be able to return to the management of foreign affairs with a quiet mind.'

'Why do you always talk as if I cared about nothing except my own comfort?' asked Douglas, in a somewhat injured tone.

'I wasn't aware that I had. When did I talk in that way?'

'Well, it is true that you haven't talked much to me in any way of late,' answered Douglas; 'but whenever you do honour me so far, you take up the same sort of tone as you are taking now. And I can't quite understand what I have done to deserve it.'

The complaint was a sufficiently absurd one; but the injustice of it was a good deal less provoking to Peggy than it would have been to a man. She perceived that he was vexed with her for having shunned him, not on account of any real or imaginary change in her opinion of him; and injustice arising from such a cause is seldom found unpardonable by the gentler sex. She did not, however, wish to embark upon a line of defence, which might

lead to embarrassing explanations ; so she contented herself with begging him briskly not to be so silly.

‘ If I meant to accuse anybody of thinking a little bit too much about his own comfort, it was Mr. Innes, not you,’ she declared. ‘ But, as a matter of fact, we all think about our own comfort ; and quite right too ! There’s no special merit in being uncomfortable : otherwise, I dare say you would be a good candidate for a prize ; for you generally seem to succeed in making yourself so. Why quarrel with me for trying to persuade you that you needn’t make yourself so about your cousin ? ’

He had no quarrel at all with her on that score, and he hastened to assure her that he had none. ‘ But it’s useless to pretend,’ he added, ‘ that we are as good friends as we used to be. You know very well that we aren’t, and I suppose you also know why we aren’t. I don’t.’

‘ Well, I believe there *was* a sort of a coolness,’ answered Peggy, laughing ; ‘ but I was under the impression that it had been banished through the good offices of Loo ; and it’s always a mistake—don’t you think so?—to inquire into the causes of little tiffs and huffs ; inquiry is so apt to start them again. Let us assume that this one was causeless and say no more about it. Will you come in and have a cup of tea with Miss Spofforth ? ’

Douglas declined both Miss Spofforth and the tea. He did not want either, and he did want—or, at any rate, he said so—to get to the bottom of a mystery which it had hitherto been beyond his capacity to solve. ‘ Would you mind telling me,’ he asked, ‘ why you turned your back upon me in London ? I hope it wasn’t because you thought me ungrateful in a political sense. I know you were kind enough to use your interest on my behalf, and I know how powerful your interest is ; but——’

‘ Oh, what a noodle you are ! ’ interrupted Peggy, the colour rising into her cheeks. ‘ Who but you would have hit upon such a far-fetched notion as that I was out of temper with you for having trampled my modest influence under foot ! You can’t have the confidence in your own merits that you ought to have, and you can have none whatsoever in mine, to talk that sort of nonsense. I’ll answer your question, though I do rather mind answering it, and though I do think it a curiously stupid one. I turned my back upon you simply because I was informed that some people were saying that you had been seeing a little too much of my face. There !—now you know all about it and if you

like to burst out laughing, you have my full permission to laugh until you split your sides. Nevertheless, it remains true that I am not an old maid yet, and that you have seen fit to separate yourself from your wife, and that gossip counts for something. I used to think that I despised gossip; but I have advanced so far towards old-maidhood now that I don't care to brave it any longer.'

Instead of laughing, Douglas looked very grave, and sighed. 'I beg your pardon,' said he. 'I ought to have thought of that, and I ought not to have been so stupid. The truth is that, until quite lately, I have always cherished a sort of hope—or at least a sort of expectation—that my wife would give in and return to me.'

'Oh, she'll do that, if you will give her time.'

'No; she has not the slightest intention of returning, and, since nobody hears us, I will confess that I haven't the slightest wish that she should. The plain English of it all is that I have made a fool of myself and that I must bear the inevitable penalty. I am not going to whine; only I wish it wasn't a part of my penalty that our old friendship must come to an end.'

Peggy had many very sensible remarks to make in contravention of so gloomy a view. She pointed out the absurdity of concluding that a woman who has left her husband has necessarily ceased to love him; she advised concessions and advances which Douglas decisively refused to grant, and she argued at considerable length upon the time-honoured thesis that cutting off your nose to spite your face is a method of procedure which can neither benefit nor harm anybody, save the individual who chooses to adopt it. But she was put to silence when her companion told her in so many words that, whether his wife desired a separation or not, he did.

By this time Douglas had fetched his horse from the stable-yard and was leading him down the avenue, while Miss Rowley walked beside her departing visitor. He said:

'I'm not to be pitied for being parted from a woman who never really cared for me and for whom, perhaps, I never really cared: it's best as it is. But you may pity my loneliness, if you like, and, as I told you just now, I do think it rather hard lines that I should be compelled to give up my friends.'

'Oh,' returned Peggy, with a short laugh, 'that affliction isn't likely to be permanent, so far as I am concerned. All I have to

do is to marry, and then I shall be free to receive any friends who conduct themselves with ordinary discretion.'

Douglas was quite surprised to find how disagreeable this simple suggestion for the removal of a difficulty was to him. 'Are you thinking of marrying then?' he asked, in a tone of voice which all his efforts could not deprive of harshness.

'Miss Spofforth says it is high time that I thought of it,' answered Peggy, 'and, all things considered, I am inclined to agree with her. Liberty is sweet; but married women have as much liberty as girls nowadays; in some respects they have even more. So perhaps I had better not delay much longer to make somebody happy.'

'H'm! anybody in particular?'

'One out of three or four, I think. There are certainly three who would do very nicely.'

'That is as much as to say that you don't love any one of the three. Well, I must say that I am astonished. I should have thought that you were the last person in the world—quite the last—to tie yourself to a man whom you didn't love. You may take my word for it that you will repent of your bargain if you do; and I ought to know!'

During the remainder of the walk to Miss Rowley's lodge Douglas did all the talking, and it must be said for him that he did it extremely well. Nobody could have depicted the folly and sin of entering upon matrimony without love in more glowing and convincing terms than he employed, nor could anybody have spoken with more perfect sincerity. He wished for nothing else—what else could he wish for?—than to restrain his friend from falling into a grievous error; it could make no difference to him personally whether she married or remained single; and if, once or twice, the thought did cross his mind that he might have been less disinterested, but for the grievous error which he himself had committed, no such thought presented itself in distinct shape to him. Only the nature of the subject caused him to notice how pretty Peggy Rowley was, and to wonder that he had not noticed it before.

She dismissed him with the valedictory remark that his sentiments were unexceptionable, although they had not the fascination of originality.

'We all know,' said she, 'what marriage is in the ideal, and most of us know what it is in reality. I have lived so long and

seen so much that I can dispense with realised ideals. So can Mr. Innes and Florence Carey and ninety-nine mortals out of any chance hundred. As for you, you are all right ; because you are going to be Prime Minister some day, and as you won't be Prime Minister next year, or even ten years hence, you are comfortably provided for. Let us make the best of things as they are, and be as jolly as circumstances will allow us to be.'

Douglas, before mounting his horse, deemed it needful to explain that circumstances did not admit of any great future jollity on his part. He likewise represented himself in the light of a sad object-lesson, and even went so far as to hint that, if he could have recalled past years and made a fresh start, his ambition would have been of a very different kind from that ascribed to him. But Peggy did not appear to have the remotest comprehension of his meaning. She thanked him for his sage counsels, promising to give them due weight before she decided to fly in the face of them, and if, at the last moment, she permitted him to hold her hand rather longer than a mere friend and country neighbour would have been likely to do, that was only because he was not, and never could be, anything more than a mere friend and country neighbour to her.

She did not recognise a gentleman on a bay horse who trotted past her immediately after Mr. Colborne had left, nor did she suspect that he had witnessed her leave-taking from her friend and had drawn hasty and inaccurate deductions from what he had seen. The Marchese di Leonforte was quite the man to draw hasty and inaccurate deductions ; but then the Marchese di Leonforte was not at all the man who could have been expected to be in Buckinghamshire at that season of the year.

CHAPTER XLII.

LEONFORTE SMELLS A RAT.

THE epoch in which we live is remarkable chiefly for the facility of communication which it affords and the ease with which, not only this or that place, but the society of those who reside therein may be reached ; so that nobody is really unlikely to be encountered at any given spot or at any given time. The Marchese di Leonforte, for example, was not at all more unlikely

to be met with at Burcote Hall than many other people to whom the hospitality of the noble owner had been extended, and, as a matter of fact, he was now staying there, although Lady Florence had not considered the circumstance worthy of mention during her stolen interview with Frank Innes.

Leonforte had stayed in many country houses and had accumulated quite a large store of knowledge relating to the English aristocracy, its manners and its customs since his departure from London. He had had what the younger members of that aristocracy, whose position corresponded to his own, would have called an uncommonly good time of it; he had yachted in the Solent; he had shot grouse in Scotland and partridges in Norfolk; he had been taken to race-meetings at Newmarket and Doncaster; and his unvarying imperturbability had earned for him a very general and very liberal measure of regard. Certainly it had been no fault of his numerous entertainers that he had been extremely unhappy the whole time and that he had suffered from homesickness in a most aggravated form of that complaint. Sicily is a mournful place of abode during the arid hot season, when all nature lies wrapped in a death-like sleep; yet home is always home, and thither all poor, disenchanted human beings must needs turn their eyes longingly after the hope of earthly happiness has finally forsaken them. Leonforte, however, could not go home; because he had a mission to accomplish before quitting northern latitudes, and he would never have been able to forgive himself, had he abandoned it, vague though his designs and prospects were. He gladly accepted the invitation with which Lady Burcote, having learnt that he was in the adjoining county, favoured him; for he was aware that Burcote Hall was situated within easy reach of the estates owned respectively by Mr. Colborne and Miss Rowley, and he was anxious, in default of any more promising plan, to keep an eye upon those two enemies of his.

He heard, without surprise and without much interest, the news that an alliance had been arranged between Lady Florence Carey and Lord Galashiels: from what Frank Innes had told him, he had assumed that to be a foregone conclusion, and hereditary prejudice forbade him to feel any great sympathy with a young man who could so far forget himself as to dream of making money by singing in places of public amusement. Still his curiosity was momentarily aroused when, (having borrowed a horse out of his host's stables and having inquired his way to Swinford Manor,

with some indefinite notion of taking preliminary observations), he encountered Lady Florence driving homewards from the rendezvous that we know of. There was, of course, no reason in the world why the girl should not be exercising her ponies; nor would he have suspected that she was out upon any unavowable errand if she had not blushed so vividly as she bowed to him. Unfortunately, she did blush, and she looked so guilty that no Italian of ordinary intelligence could have helped forming a pretty shrewd surmise as to what she had been about.

Leonforte really did not care what she had been about; it was nothing to him whether she had been meeting Frank Innes or some other forbidden admirer. But he made a mental note of the incident, just as a scavenger will pick up the most worthless of jetsam, upon the off chance of its possessing some unforeseen value, and he amused himself with idle speculations as to the meaning of Lady Florence's shamefaced aspect until she and her affairs were driven out of his mind by a much more significant spectacle, which it was his privilege to witness.

He ought not to have been astonished, nor was he precisely astonished, to see Douglas Colborne and Miss Rowley standing, hand in hand, engaged in earnest conversation; but, somehow or other, this confirmation of his conviction had the effect of making him angry. He disliked them both and did not want either of them to be happy; but probably it was less on that account than because he had a quarrel with the whole world that he was disgusted by the sight of such illicit philanderings. He himself had fallen in love with a married woman, which was doubtless a sinful thing to do; but he had been punished by contemptuous dismissal from her house, and it seemed to him only fair and just that a similar punishment should be meted out to others who were every whit as sinful as he. The worst sin that can be committed admits of being rendered more heinous when hypocrisy is superadded. At the bottom of his heart, moreover, there lurked a suspicion, which was half pleasant, half painful to him, that the Countess still believed in, if she did not positively love, her husband, and that a report of the little scene of which he had been a spectator would hurt her about as much as anything was likely to hurt her. He almost wished to see her again, if only to convey that report and to watch the result. It would be an inadequate revenge; but it would be better than none.

Evil passions had, as has been said, been stirred up in his

heart; but he had cooled down again before he returned to Burcote Hall. He was nothing if not patient; he resolved to remain where he was and to keep his eyes and ears open, hoping that in process of time he would see or hear of something rather more compromising and conclusive than an interview between two neighbours whom all the world knew to be friends. For some days his patience went unrewarded, neither Mr. Colborne's name nor that of Miss Rowley being mentioned by any member of the house-party; but one morning he was startled by the mention of another name which he could never hear without emotion.

'The Countess Radna,' Lady Burcote told him, 'has written to beg that I will let Florry spend ten days or a fortnight with her in Paris. Very kind of her, I'm sure—especially as she didn't notice Florry's existence when she was in England, that I can remember. But she says she is always interested in girls who are engaged to be married, and it's true that she did come down very handsomely at the time of her sister-in-law's engagement to Colonel Percy.'

'The Countess Radna is well known for her kindness of heart and generosity,' observed Leonforte in his grave, monotonous voice.

'Well, yes; I believe she is. And she says something about shopping. Of course there are heaps of things which one can get in Paris and nowhere else, and it does sound rather like an opportunity which it would be a pity to let slip. I think I shall allow Florry to go.'

It will be perceived that the Countess had not misjudged the light in which her invitation would probably be regarded by Lady Florence's mother, and indeed, to render assurance doubly sure, she had hinted in no obscure terms at her intention of selecting some suitable wedding-gift for the promised bride.

Leonforte, conjecturing that there was more in this project than met the eye, and gathering from Lady Burcote's interrogative tone that he was being indirectly consulted, thought it best to say: 'I am sure, madame, that you may safely confide your charming daughter to the Countess's care.'

Lady Burcote laughed and answered: 'Oh, I am not afraid that Florry will be corrupted by the Countess, who, I have no doubt, is a paragon of virtue, though she doesn't seem to have hit it off with her husband. But perhaps that is because he is another paragon, and because two of a trade never agree. The

only thing that surprises me is that she should be in Paris at this time of year. I thought nobody went to Paris in autumn.'

Leonforte had also been under that impression, and he was inclined to doubt whether the Countess's departure from the customs of fashionable society could be accounted for solely by the generosity and kindness of heart which he had affirmed to be notorious. Still, as he was unable to fathom her design and saw no reason why he should attempt to defeat it, he contented himself with taking some mental notes and repeating that the Countess Radna was, to the best of his belief, an unexceptionable chaperon.

His faculties of observation being thus on the alert, he could not fail to be struck, during luncheon time, by a certain strangeness in Lady Florence's bearing. The girl was evidently excited, and a trifle apprehensive into the bargain. Her eyes were bright; her cheeks were slightly flushed; she talked more than usual; and when the Marchese, by way of experiment, asked her whether she was looking forward to her visit to Paris, she replied that she supposed she would have to go, since she had been invited, but that it was rather a nuisance to have to take such a long journey—which was obviously disingenuous. Leonforte, in short, smelt a rat; and it so chanced that in the course of the afternoon an episode occurred which helped him to arrive at something very near a surmise of the truth.

Everybody who has stayed in a country house has suffered from one of those dreadful drives to distant places of interest which it is so difficult to find any plausible excuse for declining. Leonforte, being a foreigner, did not look as sad and sullen as we do under such circumstances, when he was made to take his place in a four-in-hand break, driven by Lord Burcote, and was dismissed for three hours in company with half-a-dozen people to whom he had nothing at all to say; but he felt the hopeless dreariness of his position quite as much as any true-born Briton could have done, and he was equally conscious of an overpowering inclination to fall asleep. Perhaps he would have fallen asleep, had not his senses been stirred into wakefulness by an encounter in a narrow lane with a dog-cart in which two gentlemen were seated. The lane was very narrow; both vehicles were brought to a momentary standstill; and so there was ample time to notice that the driver of the dog-cart, who took off his hat and pulled his horse into the ditch, was no other than Mr. Colborne, while his companion, who shot an unmistakably inquiring glance at Lady Florence, was

beyond all doubt Frank Innes. Leonforte saw the glance; he saw Lady Florence's blush—unhappily, the best bred people are those whose nerves are highly strung, whose circulation is quick and whose skins are thin—and he formed his own conclusions. He said nothing at the time; but, after dinner that evening, he remarked carelessly to Lady Florence that he had thought Mr. Innes was still abroad.

‘He has come home, it seems,’ answered the girl, avoiding her interlocutor’s eye.

‘Yes, it seems so. But he will not, perhaps, stay very long in England?’

Lady Florence laughed nervously. ‘One can’t discover a person’s intentions by looking at him, can one?’ said she; ‘and he allowed us no chance of hearing his voice this afternoon, you know. I daresay he will give you full information if you go over and call at Stoke Leighton.’

Leonforte was more than half inclined to adopt that suggestion; but he merely remarked that he feared a visit from him might not be altogether welcome to Mr. Colborne: whereupon Lady Florence made an incoherent murmur and effected her escape.

She fondly hoped that she had not betrayed herself; but, even though she should have done so, it was surely improbable that the Italian would go out of his way to serve her an unkind turn. She knew that he was upon friendly terms with Frank; he was said to be, or to have been, upon something more than friendly terms with the Countess Radna; and he could have no motive for wishing to thwart the designs of both of them.

From these reflections Lady Florence took comfort, as she journeyed, on the following day, towards London, Dover and Paris. She stood in need of all the comfort that she could give herself, because, to tell the truth, she was not a little alarmed at what she was doing. She had no lack of that species of courage which had always been one of the attributes of her family, which had led many male Careys to risk their lives in the battle-field or in the hunting-field and thoroughly enjoy the risk, while it had prompted not a few of their sisters to indulge in startling freaks of eccentricity; but if, on alighting from the railway-carriage at the Paris terminus, she had been met by Lady Burcote, and if Lady Burcote had said, ‘Florence, walk round to the opposite platform, take your ticket and go straight home,’ Florence would have obeyed at once. She would have been sorry for Frank and sorry for her-

self; but she would not have so much as thought of showing fight. If, indeed, it had been within her capacity to fight her mother, Lord Galashiels would not at that moment have been complacently informing his friends in Scotland that he had 'done it this time' and that he proposed to be 'worked off' before the end of the year.

Of course, however, Lady Burcote was not awaiting the arrival of the fugitive. Instead of her, a lady, enveloped in sables which the Czarina herself might have envied, stepped forward as soon as the train came to a standstill, the *Chef de gare* and other bedizened officials keeping a passage clear for her, and Lady Florence, after having been warmly embraced, was conducted without delay to a comfortably cushioned *coupé* and whirled off towards the Avenue Friedland. Her maid and her luggage, she was told, would follow presently; she would find all that she required for her immediate necessities on reaching her destination. People who affect to make light of the advantages of wealth are probably not very well acquainted with the annoyances of poverty; while some of us, who are poor and don't pretend to like being poor, might perhaps convince them of ingratitude to Providence if we could keep them kicking their heels for a good solid half-hour in that draughty waiting-room of the *Paris Gare du Nord* with the charms of which we are only too well acquainted. But that was far from being the lesson which the opulent Countess Radna desired to impress upon her companion. On the contrary, she wished Lady Florence to believe what, after all, is true enough, that there are many possessions infinitely more valuable than that of money, and that the love of a beloved fellow-being is unquestionably one of them.

'You are very fortunate,' she said, as they drove through the brightly-lighted streets; 'I wish I were you! Not that you won't have to put up with some troubles and inconveniences; but nothing that can be had without trouble and inconvenience is worth having at all. I am so glad you think Mr. Innes worth having; because you really make no mistake in thinking that he is.'

The girl murmured assent. 'I'm not afraid of trouble or inconvenience,' she remarked after a pause; 'only I'm horribly afraid of being caught and dragged home ignominiously. If only the whole thing could be got through and done with tomorrow!'

'Ah, that's impossible; but I don't think there is any need for you to be alarmed. All precautions have been taken. Besides, I have made up my mind to accomplish this marriage, and every-

body who knows me would tell you that when I make up my mind to accomplish a thing, I generally manage to be successful.'

Now, this was quite true, and it was not surprising that the Countess, who was really entitled to consider herself a very powerful personage, should have imagined that she could override certain legal provisions relating to the marriage of British subjects abroad. She had partially informed herself of these, had found them to be vexatious, and had airily resolved that they must be dispensed with on the present occasion. Dispensations, she assumed, were always obtainable when asked for by sufficiently exalted individuals: if any fuss was made, she would write a few lines to the English ambassador, who was temporarily absent from his post. That the English ambassador might not see his way to aiding and abetting a breach of the law did not strike her as a probable contingency. Does not an ambassador represent the person of his sovereign?—and are not even constitutional sovereigns above the law?

Lady Florence, fortunately, did not require to be reassured upon points which had scarcely troubled her. On the other hand, she could not help wondering very much why her kind hostess should be taking such pains on her behalf; and, after an extremely artistic little *tête-à-tête* dinner, (for it was not every day that Bickenbach and Dr. Schott were invited to dine at their patroness's table), she somewhat brusquely avowed her perplexity.

'I'm afraid it sounds awfully ungrateful,' said she; 'but I wish you wouldn't mind telling me what it all means. It seems so funny that you should care, one way or the other.'

'I don't wonder at your thinking it funny,' answered the Countess, with a good-humoured smile; 'but in reality I have several motives, not one of which has the smallest claim upon your gratitude. To begin with, I am honestly fond of Frank Innes, who has always struck me as the best specimen of an English gentleman that I have had the luck to encounter. Then I have a desire—a superstitious desire, if you like—to feel that I have done at least one good deed before I die.'

Here she came to such a protracted pause that Lady Florence remarked at length: 'You will have time to perform several thousands of good deeds before then, I should think.'

'I am afraid not. Everything leads me to believe that I have a mortal disease which may carry me off in a couple of months and which certainly won't spare me for another couple of years. I don't want to talk about that, though; because it is a disagreeable

subject. I was going to say that I have a third motive—an ignoble, but perhaps not an unnatural one. My husband, as you may be aware, professes also to have a great affection for his cousin; he patronises the young man in his sensible, immaculate way; he means to do all sorts of fine things for him eventually, if he behaves himself; but he wouldn't raise his little finger to help him to the one thing that he wants, because young men never know what is good for them. Well, such is my malignity that I look forward with a good deal of pleasure to the shock that my sensible, immaculate husband will receive when he hears of Frank's marriage.'

Lady Florence stared. 'But do you really think,' she asked wonderingly, 'that it will make so very much difference to Mr. Colborne?'

'For Heaven's sake, don't try to persuade me that it won't! Would you deprive me of my strongest incentive to benevolence? You would have shown more tact if, instead of saying that, you had pointed out that it can't make very much difference to me whether Mr. Colborne is pleased or displeased.'

'Ah, but I have no tact,' answered the girl; 'I'm utterly devoid of it. Mamma and my sisters and my governesses have always told me so.'

'Never mind; you are better off, perhaps, with honesty and that kind of bluntness which nobody objects to when it is practised by a woman whose face is as pretty as yours. Now I am going to send you off to bed; for my doctor makes me keep early hours, and you must be dead tired after your journey.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

PATERNAL AUTHORITY.

LEONFORTE, after he had witnessed Lady Florence's departure for France, did not deem it advisable to act upon her thoughtful suggestion that he should call at Stoke Leighton, with a view to obtaining information at first hand as to Frank Innes's intentions. All things considered, the information which he had already received seemed to him to be almost precise enough for practical purposes: besides which, he had a strong disinclination to hold any further parley with Mr. Colborne. He wanted, however, to see Frank, and a brief examination of time-tables led him to con-

clude that that young man would leave the neighbourhood by the 3.20 P.M. train for London, so as to 'dine comfortably at his club before taking the night-mail to Paris. People who are flying from the country with surreptitious matrimonial designs do not, he reasoned, commit the imprudence of travelling together, while neither is likely to be guilty of the discourtesy of keeping the other waiting longer than is necessary; and the accuracy of his judgment was proved by the fact that he had not been loitering for a quarter of an hour in the vicinity of the station adjoining Stoke Leighton, that afternoon, when the man for whom he was waiting drove up in a dog-cart, jumped down, tipped the groom and handed his belongings over to a porter.

Leonforte hastened to step forward, and was received, as he had expected to be, with feigned surprise and ill-disguised annoyance. There was not much time to be lost; so he disposed in a few words of Frank's perfunctory queries and said boldly:

'I trust you have not told anyone about this scheme of the Countess Radna's. It is a dangerous and difficult scheme, Mr. Innes, and you cannot be too careful to keep it a secret.'

Frank started, but fell into the trap instantly and unsuspectingly. 'Oh, you've heard of it from her, then?' said he. 'Yes, it's a bit risky of course; but it was our only chance, and I believe we shall pull through now. I haven't told Douglas, if that's what you mean, nor anybody else either. How could you think I should be such an ass! Did the Countess tell you to keep an eye upon me?'

Leonforte smiled. 'You are sometimes a little imprudent,' he answered, with judicious evasion; 'the Countess may be pardoned if she has felt some natural anxiety. The marriage, I presume, will take place as soon as you reach Paris?'

'Oh, dear, no; there are lots of bothering formalities to go through. As far as I can make out, we shall have to wait three weeks or a month. But that will be all right; because Lady Florence will be staying with the Countess, you know, and her people aren't so fond of her that they would mind if she remained away for a couple of months. Hullo! here comes the train. Well, good-bye, old chap. See you again some day, I hope.'

Leonforte, as he turned away, after bidding adieu to this singularly ingenuous youth, thought to himself, with a grim smile, that they would probably meet again rather sooner than one of them expected or desired. He meant to betray the ingenuous youth, and he had no scruples of conscience whatsoever about so doing.

Different nations have different codes respecting honour and morality. Had Frank spontaneously confided his secret to his Italian friend, the latter would have allowed himself to be cut in pieces before he would have revealed it to any human being: as it was, he considered himself perfectly free to make any use he pleased of facts which had come to his knowledge through his own dexterity; and he proposed to utilise them for the discomfiture of the Countess Radna. The scheme was her scheme, and that was a more than sufficient reason for wrecking it. When it should have been wrecked, he and she would still not be quits—far from it!—yet he would have done something, however little, towards paying off the heavy debt that he owed her. As for Frank Innes and Lady Florence Carey, it is to be feared that he did not trouble his head much about them. When all was said, they were subordinate personages. Insubordinate too, for the matter of that, and upon general grounds deserving of any chastisement that might befall them. It is not necessary to be an illogical Sicilian in order to appreciate the immense distinction which exists between one's own love affairs and those of one's neighbours.

Congratulating himself, therefore, upon the prospect that his long period of inaction was at last about to be broken, the Marchese returned to Burcote Hall, and, meeting his host upon the staircase shortly before the dinner-hour, took that opportunity to request a few minutes of private conversation.

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Lord Burcote, after he had conducted the informer into his study and had listened to a statement the substantial accuracy of which seemed to be beyond question. He added a few ejaculations of a somewhat more forcible description, and then observed briefly: 'I must put a stop to this. I shall run across to Paris tomorrow and bring my daughter back with me.'

Leonforte intimated by a grave bow that that measure would, in his opinion, be a wise one to adopt; after which he took the liberty to propose himself as a travelling companion. 'For I also,' said he, 'intend to leave for Paris tomorrow.'

'Indeed?' returned Lord Burcote, glancing sharply and somewhat suspiciously at the other for a moment. 'I don't quite see the necessity for that.'

'Private and personal affairs, which require my attention——'

'Of course—of course, my dear fellow! I beg your pardon, I'm sure; one is apt to forget, when such confounded things as this happen, that other people may have private and personal affairs.'

And really I'm very much indebted to you for your prompt information. Not that such a crack-brained plot could possibly have succeeded or have been kept secret from us; but one naturally wishes to put the extinguisher upon it before the Embassy people and the parson and half a dozen others are let into the secret. You can understand how very important it is that the secret should be kept, and you will add infinitely to the obligation under which you have already placed me if you will keep it.'

Leonforte hastened to assure the anxious parent that Lady Florence's escapade should never be mentioned by him to anyone, save to those who were concerned in it.

'Thank you very much. And perhaps you'll be so kind as to say nothing even to Lady Burcote. It's quite a case of least said soonest mended, you see; and no questions will be asked about my going over to France, because I often do go there for a day or two to look at horses and that sort of thing. You're not a family man, or you would know what a nuisance domestic rows are; and although Florry has behaved like a perfect idiot, I don't want to be harder upon her than I can help. That singing fellow must be an average fool too; but, if I may be permitted to say so, your friend the Countess Radna appears to me to be by far the biggest fool of the lot.'

'I do not think that the Countess is a fool,' said Leonforte, who, for some reason which he would have been puzzled to explain, resented that description of his enemy.

'Well, well! She's a woman, at all events; and that's why I shall take devilish good care not to tell her what I think of her. In the course of my life,' added Lord Burcote, with a retrospective smile, 'I have had some little experience of women, and I will make so bold as to affirm that you ought *never*, under any circumstances, to let them know what you really think of them. You may flatter them outrageously or you may abuse them outrageously; but if you let them have the plain, unvarnished truth, by George, they'll make you wish you had held your tongue before they've done with you!'

Lord Burcote was so pleased with this astute and concise appreciation of feminine characteristics that he went upstairs to dress for dinner chuckling cheerfully, notwithstanding all the good reasons that he had for being seriously angry. He did not ignore the gravity of the *contretemps* which had occurred; he knew as well as anybody that a secret which is already shared by at least five

individuals must become public property in the long run, and he doubted very much whether Lord Galashiels was the man to marry a girl who had attempted to run away and marry someone else; but he was naturally good-humoured and courageous, while observation of life and humanity had rendered him a trifle cynical. It was certain that Florry would have to return home with him; it was equally certain that she would thankfully second his efforts to keep her mother in the dark; and, for the rest, one could but trust to luck. Luck had sometimes favoured Lord Burcote and sometimes deserted him: like Napoleon III. after Reichshoffen, and perhaps with rather more justification than that hapless potentate, he murmured to himself, 'Tout peut se réparer.'

As he had anticipated, his announcement that he had 'heard something' which would necessitate his crossing the Channel aroused no comment in the family circle; for he was constantly hearing of something connected with turf matters which entailed sudden journeys. As for the Marchese di Leonforte, nobody in the house cared a straw whether he went or stayed; and in truth his visit had been quite as long as his hostess had intended it to be.

Without let or hindrance, therefore, these two ministers of destiny set forth to accomplish their task, and, on reaching the French capital, took up their quarters at the Hôtel Bristol; for Lord Burcote, like the generality of men who have no money to throw away, scorned petty economies. His lordship, knowing that there was no hurry, rose late on the following morning, looked in at two clubs of which he was a member, lunched with a French fellow-sportsman whom he encountered at one of them, and in the afternoon had himself driven to the Countess Radna's residence, where, as need scarcely be said, he was refused admittance. For this preliminary rebuff, however, he had been prepared; so he merely sent in his card a second time, with a thousand apologies for his importunity, which, he said, would have been inexcusable, had it not been a matter of sheer necessity that he should see the Countess for five minutes. He would endeavour not to intrude upon her for more than five minutes.

Immediately afterwards he was conducted into the presence of his fair antagonist, whose reception of him was gracious and amiable in the extreme.

'My dear Lord Burcote,' she cried, 'I am horrified to hear that you were nearly turned away from the door! The truth is that I am not very well and that I am not receiving visitors. I

could not divine that you were in Paris, could I? And Lady Burcote—is she with you?’

Lord Burcote laughed. As has been said before, he was a goodhumoured man, and he was tickled by an underlying inflection of anxiety which he detected in the Countess's tone.

‘I am thankful to say that she is not,’ he replied. ‘Perhaps I may venture to assume that you also are thankful for that mercy? Because, although you could not have divined that I was in Paris, I am sure you must divine now what has brought me here, and I have no doubt that you agree with me in disliking noisy and unnecessary scenes. Far be it from me to load you with reproaches, *Madame la Comtesse*; I will only beg you to be so kind as to let my daughter know that I have come for her, and that she will accompany me presently to the *Hôtel Bristol*.’

The Countess, as soon as her visitor's card had been brought to her, had of course prepared herself to do battle; but she had not expected a mode of attack at once so courteous and so peremptory, and she was momentarily disconcerted. ‘I suppose I may thank Mr. Colborne for this; I might have known that that silly boy would betray himself to his cousin!’ she exclaimed.

‘I am not aware of his having done so, and I sincerely trust that he hasn't; though I quite agree with you that he is silly enough for anything. To be sure, he seems to have had advisers who were—well, let us say, not remarkable for excessive wisdom. Fortunately, one of them—your Italian *protégé*, Leonforte—was sane enough to come to me and tell me what was up. I need scarcely add that I shall keep my own counsel about this ridiculous affair, and I venture to hope that you and young Innes will be equally discreet. Because, really, you know, it reflects little credit upon the intelligence of any of the persons concerned in it. Now, if you will be so good as to send for Florry, I will not intrude upon you much longer.’

‘And suppose I decline to obey your orders, Lord Burcote?’

‘My dear lady, you can't! I have an absolute right to the custody of my daughter, and you must be aware that I shall insist upon my right. Surely you do not wish to cover yourself and me with ridicule by compelling me to invoke the assistance of the police!’

The Countess set her teeth and tapped the floor angrily with her foot. ‘That cowardly, treacherous Sicilian!’ she exclaimed.

‘I am not here to defend him,’ observed Lord Burcote, with a smile; ‘you may wring his neck, for anything that I care. Only I wouldn't be too hard upon him, if I were you; because he has

really rendered you, as well as us, a service. Your plan of marrying off my daughter without my consent was preposterously impracticable, and I am glad you don't know it, because that shows that you haven't yet taken the preliminary steps. Had you done so, Royston would at once have telegraphed to me, the whole story would have been sure to get into the newspapers, and for the next month or more we should have been the laughing-stock of all England. No! I think you must not be so ungrateful as to quarrel with your Sicilian.'

'I am not convinced,' returned the Countess, 'that things would have fallen out in the manner that you describe; but we will not waste time in discussing what might have been. What has happened is that we have been betrayed and that you are here to claim your daughter. Lord Burcote, neither you nor I are religious people. I cannot believe in Christianity, and you, I should imagine, are postponing the consideration of theological creeds until your death-bed, when they will cease to be inconvenient. Still I suppose we both have principles of a kind; right and wrong are not absolutely meaningless words to us; we admit that certain proceedings are disgraceful. Doesn't it strike you as a disgraceful proceeding to force a daughter of yours into the arms of a man whom she hates so much that she has run away from him and to drag her away by main force from a man whom you know that she loves?'

Lord Burcote widened out his mouth and thrust his chin forward, as his habit was when any man or woman tried to steal a march upon him. 'You must excuse me,' he replied, 'if I remind you that the responsibility of conducting my family affairs rests solely upon my own shoulders, which are, I believe, broad enough to sustain the burden. You may rest assured that I shall do just exactly what I think fit to do.'

The Countess cast a scornful glance at him, and, without making any rejoinder, rang the bell. The servant who appeared in answer to her summons took a message from her to Lady Florence, and presently the girl entered the room, looking very pale and frightened. Her protectress stepped up to her side, before Lord Burcote could utter a word, and said:

'My dear, your father has heard everything and has come here to take you home. He asserts that the law gives him power and authority over you—which is true, I believe. But there is no reason for you to surrender, provided that you have the courage

to tell him that you will not leave me and that you will marry the man whom you have chosen. He talks of calling in the police; but he is far too much afraid of ridicule to have recourse to such methods. I promise you, in his presence, that I will make it my business to provide you and your husband with an income which will at least free him from the obligation of settling a single *centime* upon you. All you have to say is that you refuse to stir: then we shall see what will happen next.'

But alas! poor Lady Florence's valour was not equal to the demand made upon it. She thought of Frank, whom she had seen that morning and whose sanguine spirits had buoyed up her own for the time being; she thought of the odious Galashiels, whose wife she inwardly vowed that she never could and never would become; she tried hard to believe that the Countess was right and that she had but to assert herself in order to conquer; yet, somehow or other, she could not bring herself to say what she wished to say; and when, after a helpless and appealing glance at her father, whose countenance remained impassive, she opened her lips at length, it was only to gasp out feebly:

'Does Mamma know?'

Lord Burcote rose and advanced. 'Heaven be praised,' he replied, 'your dear mother is still in blissful ignorance of all this; and in ignorance she shall remain. I promise you that; and it seems to me that my promise is a rather more practical one than the Countess Radna's. Come, my dear girl, you know very well that I don't enjoy bullying you; but—what can't be cured must be endured. If I were to talk from now till midnight, I could not put the case more truthfully or more convincingly. Come with me you must; and I do hope you will have the sense to come without making a fuss about it.'

'I cannot marry Lord Galashiels,' said Lady Florence, with tremulous firmness.

'Very well, my dear; you and your mother and Galashiels must settle that question among you. I never insisted upon your marrying the man. But I do forbid you to marry young Innes, and I venture to prophesy that you will live to thank me for having exercised my right of veto as regards him.'

The girl shook her head.

'Well, at all events, you will live to thank me for having shown some discrimination in getting you out of an uncommonly awkward hole. It will be all right at home: we will say that you

didn't like Paris, or that your hospitable entertainer was unwell—I very much regret to hear from her that she is unwell—or this, or that, or t'other. But we won't tell the truth.'

Ten minutes later Lady Florence had quitted the Avenue Friedland with her father. Her boxes were to be sent after her to the Hôtel Bristol, and she would start for England either that night or on the following morning, Lord Burcote announced. The Countess was very angry; but what was the use of being angry? She was not even sure that there would be any great use in delivering a message with which she had been entrusted at the last moment.

'Tell Frank,' Lady Florence had whispered, 'that I can't help deserting him now, but that I will never marry anybody else. Perhaps he won't believe me after my having accepted Lord Galashiels once; but he may safely believe me, all the same.'

(To be continued.)

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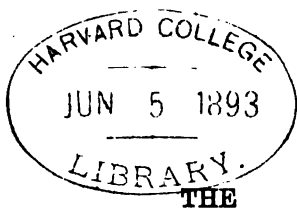
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JUNE 1898.

MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER LII.

THROWING UP THE BALL.

WITH difficulty Esther Morideg was drawn out of the beehive hut in which she had taken refuge. Her clothes were soaked, she was in a fever, and delirious. The wet, the exposure, the cold, hunger, had driven her temporarily from her senses.

Tregaskis, constable though he was, treated the poor girl with great kindness, spoke gently, caressingly to her, told her not to be frightened; that he and the others would get her to a house where she would be put into a warm bed, and made comfortable. She did not heed him. She seized Justinian by the arm, and drew him to her, and muttered hoarsely, 'I'll die game. Tell her so. I'll not speak a word.'

'I have a flask of sherry with me,' said the boy. 'Let her have some—she must be starving.'

'She is in a fever,' said Tregaskis. 'Now, sir, we must carry her, or get her to walk between us all the way; or will you run on to Trevillian's gate and bring your cart over the down to under Rough Tor? I think it can be got so far.'

do it,' said Justinian.

d.—look here, sir! We'll just be so bold as to borrow the you to take her anyways as far as to Five Lanes. She can't ight on foot that distance. Very considerate of you, sir, to 'he trap for us.'

'I will do what I can,' said Justinian, biting his lips. 'Of course, there is but one thing now to be done—to see that she be cared for, and have the doctor to her. She is very ill.'

He hurried away down the mountain side. He was angry with himself, angry with Tregaskis. Instead of being the means of helping Esther to escape from the moors, he had, like a fool—he said that to himself—led the police to where she was concealed, and he was the only person who could have done so, for no one else had a notion where she was.

But after the first ebullition of vexation at his mismanagement of the commission given him, he recovered. The girl was seriously ill. What could he have done, had he found her in this condition without some one at his back to assist him? What, under the circumstances, could have been done save remove her to a place where she would be attended to? He could not have allowed her to remain in her cell on the mountain top, among the clouds, there to die in fever and delirium. He must have gone in quest of assistance, and assistance brought there meant the revelation of her place of retreat, her removal, and consignment to the custody of the police. After all considered and said, what had happened was perhaps the best thing that could have happened. What would have been the fate of the poor girl but for him? How could her life have been preserved but for him? How would the police have found her but for him? On all sides a debt of obligation was due to him. So he held up his head once more, and felt that he was a person of importance.

The sick girl was brought to Five Lanes, and Justinian insisted on Tregaskis taking her in his trap; he would hire another, and one far less convenient, at the inn for himself. So he was left behind, and the constable with his charge, and another policeman, went on towards Curgenven. He, Justinian, waited till a clumsy horse was put into a still more clumsy two-wheeled conveyance, and in this he was driven at a slow jog towards his home.

'After all,' growled Justinian, 'that precious noodle, Tregaskis, has brought to Mrs. Rowe, of Five Lanes, more than the half-crown I calculated on spending there. I shall have to give seven-and-six, and a bob to the driver, for this beastly trap.'

The son of the landlady at Five Lanes drove him, but Justinian was in no humour for conversation. Not only was he wet and chilled after the walk and after having become hot in the scramble, but the temporary elation, that had followed on his

depression at having been the vehicle for the discovery and arrest of Esther, passed off, and he began to realise for the first time in his life that he had played a sorry figure—that in the first place he had made a fool of himself in giving occasion of talk relative to himself and Esther, to such an extent as to have led Tregaskis to watch him, with the conviction that through him the whereabouts of the girl might be discovered.

In the next place, it was a humiliation to his self-esteem to feel that he had been outwitted by the 'owl,' the 'idiot,' the 'jackass' whom he had treated with such impertinence, and to know that he had placed himself at this man's mercy. Tregaskis could, if he chose, make the matter unpleasant not for him only, but also for his father. It would indeed be a scandal if it became public that he, the son of a justice of the peace, had been aiding Esther to evade capture on a warrant issued by his own father.

A bitter medicine is the humiliation of self-esteem, and the more bitter the greater the self-esteem is. Justinian had not valued himself, his abilities, his position, at a low figure, and the consciousness of his having blundered egregiously was to him now as wormwood.

But conceited though he was, his nature was healthy and his heart right, and by the time he had reached Curgenven he had resolved on what he would do. Instead of going directly home, he drove to the constabulary residence, and there dismissed the trap. In the cottage lived Tregaskis with his sister, considerably older than himself, who kept house for him. Justinian entered, and was told that Esther was being cared for by Miss Tregaskis, a clean, kind-hearted, energetic, and sensible woman, and that the doctor had been summoned and was momentarily expected.

'Look here, constable,' said Justinian, 'I'll tell you what I have come for, not only to ask after the poor girl, but to beg your pardon. I've not behaved right to you. Now, if you choose, you can make it hot for me. However, let no considerations one way or the other influence you; do what is your duty. If you think it well to say that because there had been some silly chatter about me and Esther, you watched me so as to discover her retreat, you are welcome. I know she is innocent. I have evidence that will at once clear her. Knowing that, I went to find her. I could not account for her running away. As for the chatter, it is not well founded. Miss Alice, my cousin, and I have both pitied and liked the girl, so has my stepmother, and

when all the rest of the world went against her, we rather held to her, and believed in her. I don't want any sort of nasty gossip to grow out of this, there has been enough of idle talk already; it will deepen into something worse if it comes out that you followed me in order to find where she hid. As far as I am concerned, if I have given occasion for such talk, I must bear it, but it will injure *her*. And it will trouble my dear father exceedingly. There you have it in a nutshell. If you can, without breach of duty, spare us, I shall be for ever grateful to you; if you can't, well, I must bear it, and so must my father, who will, I suppose, resign his magistracy. But, first of all, consider what is your duty, and do that. As for the past, and my impertinence to you, an officer under the Queen, I heartily, unreservedly say—I am sorry, and ask your forgiveness. There's my hand.'

Tregaskis saluted, he was too modest to accept the proffered hand of the young squire, but he said:

'Sir, Mr. Justinian, I am touched. You may rely on me. I will not say a word beyond what I am obliged. I am heartily rejoiced to hear that you can clear Esther Morideg. I, myself, have had my doubts about her guilt, for I have learned that the lodge-keeper saw Mr. Physic go towards the Hall only twenty minutes or half an hour before he was proved dead, and the gardener saw him near the Bungalow. Besides, the butler says he called at the house to inquire after Mrs. Curgenven. All which points to suicide rather than murder.'

'Then I can swear,' said Justinian, 'that the pistol was in its place on the rack an hour before, as I was in the smoking-room of the Bungalow after my gun, and saw it there. So that, unless Esther were seen going to the Bungalow within that hour, the case against her falls to the ground; and unless the bench be as great owls as coroner and jury, they will see that, and dismiss the case against Esther.'

'There are difficulties still—what she said to the dowager Mrs. Curgenven. But I dare say the girl saw what took place, and was frightened, and ran away, thinking that in some fashion the seeing Mr. Physic shoot himself would bring her to trouble. Can't say—it may be so. But as to yourself, sir, I'll not say anything I needn't say, not only for your own sake, but for hers. Poor maid, she's suffered enough already, and is now terrible off her head. I reckon she must have been days and nights in soaking clothes, without fire or food. She's got a rare constitution, but it would

want that of a rhinoceros to pull through such contraries as she has undergone.'

Justinian walked off. 'Tregaskis is not such a bad fellow as I thought him,' he commented, 'nor quite such a fool as I supposed; he'll get on in his profession. I'll speak to the governor to give him a leg up.'

On reaching home the hour was late, past the dinner-hour, but his father was not below. The butler told Justinian that Mr. Curgenven was upstairs with the doctor from Plymouth. The boy hastily dressed, glad to relieve himself of his sopping clothes, and then ran down again, to find his father with the doctor descending the great staircase.

'Above all,' said the latter, 'she must not be agitated. Any shock, any strain might be fatal. I don't say she may not pull through—but you must be careful. Mind this—the best doctor, the best nurse, are absence from anxiety and from worry; negative nurse and negative doctor, but keep her amused.'

Justinian could say nothing to his father at dinner, the medical man was there, and in a hurry, as he had to catch a train, but he saw that his father's face was grave, his mind abstracted, so that he either did not hear or found no humour in the doctor's jokes.

When the latter was gone, Justinian went to his father, took his hand and said, 'Governor, is she very bad?'

Percival pressed his son's hand and his lip quivered, he could not speak.

'May I go and see her to-night, gov.?'

At that moment the door opened, and the servant who was acting as nurse came in, and said that her mistress was very anxious to see Mr. Justinian, if he were returned.

'Go, old boy,' said Percival. 'It will fidget her if she does not see you. I say,' he drew his son to his side, 'you won't mind, will you, giving her a kiss; she will value it. She hasn't but me who cares a snap for her, I mean. She will be pleased, you know, and perhaps you mayn't have many chances.' He could not say more, he gulped something down. 'Justin, she does like you. Now don't excite her, be very quiet. But if you could kiss her, it would be better than a sleeping draught. I know it would give her so much pleasure. I don't know what I shall do—but go along, don't keep her waiting.'

On entering his stepmother's room, Justinian saw her sitting

where he had left her many hours before, in the same attitude, the same picture of mute despair, a small dark figure in the large room decorated with light curtains and paper, her dark hair shining doubly dark against her white face and throat. He was touched, and stepping over to her, stood behind the chair, leaned forward, took her head between his hands, and kissed it.

A flush of colour rose into her pale cheeks, and a light smile formed on her lips.

'Dear mother—dear, dear mother,' he said, fondling her thin white fingers, 'you must get well, you must do so for my father's sake and mine. The governor is in a dreadful take on about you. 'Pon my word, I don't know what he would do without you. There—you really will make an effort to shake this off. It's only a good lusty effort is needed to make the dad and me happy again.'

'Dear Justin,' said Theresa, 'I would do anything for him—anything I could—and for you. I love you both. I have no one else to love. But now tell me, what have you done?'

'I must not excite you. That old codger, Tonks, said so.'

'I shall be far more excited if I do not know what has taken place. I shall fret and work myself into a fever.'

'Oh, my dear mother, you are too cold and white to get into a fever through any amount of excitement. I have just seen fever, what it really is, and you might as well talk of scrambling up Salisbury steeple as of getting into a fever.'

'I really must know.'

'And I really do not think I ought to tell you.'

She looked steadily at him out of her great dark eyes.

'Indeed, Justin, it would kill me to be left in suspense.'

He seated himself, as he had done once before, at the time when they had made peace, on a stool by her side, looking up into her face.

'Hang it! I don't know what to do. I've gone boggling about doing the wrong things all day, and chaps I've turned up my nose at have had twice as much wits as myself. And now—here am I, I heard old Tonks say you were not to be agitated, that it was as much as your life was worth to be excited, that you must be left in the most complete repose.'

'But I cannot repose; I shall not sleep a wink till I know all. Where is Esther?'

'Must I say?' The boy looked at her disconsolately. 'If I

do you harm, I shall never know an hour's peace. My dear mother, I have such a pain in my heart now because you are ill. I cannot endure more, indeed I cannot.'

'You have bad tidings, and fear to tell me. Tell me all, or I shall imagine something far worse than the reality.'

'Well, if it must be. Esther is in the hands of the police.'

Theresa dropped her hands on her lap, and looking dreamily before her said, 'I thought it would come to that in time.'

'She is in high fever. The poor girl has suffered dreadful exposure, and has undergone great privation. When she was found, she was delirious, and she is so still.'

'She did all in her power for me. I will not desert her.'

Theresa spoke in a tone of weariness and resignation.

'You know,' said Justinian, 'there is no reason why all should come out, if you don't wish it; and, of course, it is better it should not. It is only to trail a red herring across the path, and the police will go after it like a pack of hounds.'

'It must all come to light now,' said Theresa. 'I fought against it as long as I could, but it is over—I mean fighting. I have not the strength. It must all come out.'

She spoke calmly.

'I say, I hope this won't upset you, and prevent your sleeping to-night.'

'No, I had made up my mind for it. I knew it must come. I have felt it here'—she touched her heart—'a sort of something here that told me to—to throw up the ball.'

'I am so glad you are not agitated.'

'No. I am past that. I should have been agitated unless I had been told all. Now, it is as well as it is. You will see Esther, tell her——'

'She is not in her senses.'

'Yes, I remember, you said so. When she is herself again, assure her that she shall get into no further trouble. I will tell all.'

'But there is really no necessity.'

With a faint smile Theresa said, 'There is no more game after the ball is thrown up. I throw up the ball.'

'Esther keeps on repeating that she will be silent. That is what her heated brain holds to.'

'More reason why I should speak. Justin, dear'—she put her hand out to him and he clasped it—'Justin, dear, it is to me an in-

finite comfort that you have got over your prejudices against me, and that you like me. You will never believe I did this thing intentionally. I did it without knowing what I did, and I was fighting your battle and your dear father's, though you were both unaware of it. You will find that out now. To-morrow, it is too late now, to-morrow morning let the Rector and Mrs. Jane come here. I want to see them all, and tell all before them and your father and you. You will go for them?'

'If I must.'

'I wish it. And now—good night. Kiss me once again, Justin, it does me good.'

CHAPTER LIII.

THE END OF THE WILL.

AT breakfast next morning Justinian asked his father how the patient was.

'She has had a quiet night; she is getting up now, and told me to remind you to bring old Pamphlet and Jane. What she wants with Jane, I can't think; about the last person I'd like to see. And Jane is not the person to come here, unless to gloat over Theresa's illness.'

It was unusual for Percival to speak harshly of anyone, but he made an exception relative to Jane Curgenven. When he did say sharp things, it was with a jaunty, good-humoured air, that showed those who heard him that he did not mean what his words implied; but it was otherwise now. His tone was full of bitterness as he referred to the dowager Mrs. Curgenven.

'I believe that woman, if my dear wife were dying, would'—Percival tore the toast he held in his hands to pieces, and ground his heel into the floor—'no, Justin, I won't speak of her. She makes my blood boil. She is one of your self-righteous people who believe no one can be a good Christian and respectable who does not hector and lecture the poor, take a class at Sunday-school, and believe in missionaries. Justin, I've knocked a good deal about the world, and for narrowness, spitefulness, lack of charity, commend me to your professional angels.'

Percival's hand quivered with anger. He said more in his wrath than he really felt when cool, just as sometimes in his jokes he gave vent to sentiments he did not seriously entertain.

‘Justin, in the Arctic regions the Esquimaux wear a sort of wooden spectacle, with a tiny slit in each eye-piece, and they see nothing but what comes just within the radius of this slit, and that they see only for harpooning purposes. It is so with creatures of the Jane Curgenven type.’ He thrust away his plate. ‘I’ve lost my appetite. I have done breakfast,’

‘Please, sir, a gentleman wants to see you,’ the butler spoke, standing in the door.

‘Who is it?’

‘I think, sir, it is the young Mr. Physic.’

‘Oh! show him into the study. Stay—no—show him in here, he must have ridden or driven over, and may like a snack.’

In another moment a youth was introduced, dressed in mourning, but in mourning of the most groom-like cut—short coat, tight breeches buttoned down over the calves, a black silk tie with a horseshoe pin in it.

‘Do, sir?’ said young Physic. ‘Come early, I know. Heaps of business since my poor uncle’s affair. Awful affair his. Amount of business to me overwhelming. I’m not used to it.’

‘Are you going on with his business?’

‘I! Lawk no! Haven’t the head for it. Never took to an office. My uncle at one time did offer me a place at his desk, but kicked me out before the fortnight was well over. Sell his business. Hope I shall get an offer. Anyhow, I’m clearing out, that’s why I came over. Here’s something I’ve jumped on I s’pose concerns you. Here you are.’ He fumbled in his breast-pocket and pulled out a long envelope.

‘Mr. Physic, you must have had a long drive or ride.’

‘I rode.’

‘Then surely you will be glad of a little refreshment. We are rather late at breakfast to-day. My poor wife is very unwell, and it has upset our arrangements.’

‘Thanks, I’ll peck a bit.’ Mr. Physic drew a chair to the table.

‘I say, I found that paper there in my uncle’s desk. It has “Curgenven” on it. Will, or something of the sort. I don’t want it, you may have it. I suppose it belongs to you. I know nothing about these sort of things. I’m clearing out; as soon as decent I’m going to marry, and set up here—I mean at Liskeard. Livery stables is my notion. Pot a lot of money that way and enjoy life. That’s the straight tip, eh?’

'Why, preserve me! This is a will—it is dear old Lambert's will!' exclaimed Percival.

'I dare say it is. S'pose so. Looks like it; smells like it. I hate all your legal papers, make me sick. Give me a stable, that's your true home for a man of taste.'

'Why, murder!' exclaimed Percival. 'It is the very will old Fizz—I beg pardon, I mean Mr. Physic—flourished with, and thought with it to scare me and my poor wife.'

'Ah! I'm glad you like it. Thought 'twas something in your way,' said the heir of Physic. 'Now, I'll trouble you—let me see, Mr. Justinian, you cater—to a kidney, and some of the toast under. To my mind, there ain't nothing as 'll beat toast under kidney, well saturated and hot.'

'I'm afraid this is not quite hot,' said Justinian.

'Never mind; it would be better hot, but it's good as it is. I'll thank you for the potato chips, they look scrumptious.'

'Justin!' said Percival, 'run with all your legs to the rectory and fetch the Venerable Pam and Jane. They must see this, and, by George! we shall have to put heads together and consider what is to be done. I'll attend to Mr. Physic.'

'You haven't,' said Mr. Physic, 'just a nip of something warmer than that chilled coffee, have you? I've had a long ride.'

'I think I can serve you,' said Percival. 'By Jove! this is a perplexing affair. I don't know what to say to it, and which way to take it. I don't even know whether the will is a genuine article, or got up just to scare, like a turnip-head with a candle inside. Run along, Justin. 'Pon my word, I've a great mind to tell Theresa. It might interest her, and she's awfully dull up there in her room. It can't excite her harmfully, and it might be a stimulant to her jaded interest. I'm shot if I won't try it. Tonks said she was to be kept amused. You will help yourself, and excuse me, Mr. Physic.'

'Certainly, certainly, sir; make yourself quite at home with me. I never stand on ceremony myself, in my little box.' Percival went upstairs.

'My dearest,' he said, 'such a joke!—actually old Fizz was right. There *was* a will.'

His wife looked up into his face lovingly, but with little inquiry in it.

'I mean--don't you remember?—Physic frightened you once with hinting that there had been a will made by Lambert that

left everything to Jane and Alice. Well, there was such a will.'

'Yes, I knew it. But where is the joke?'

'Well, it's a grim sort of joke too, for I suppose it turns me out of Curgenven. But I haven't mastered the contents, only old Fizz did not speak without grounds as I supposed.'

'And the will——'

'Here it is. ~~It~~ has turned up. A cub of a nephew has come in for all Physic's property, and has found it, and brought it here. He understands nothing about it, all his thoughts are on horses.'

Percival put the will into his wife's hands, and she laid it unopened on her lap.

'I know its contents, Percy,' she said. 'It beggars you. You will have to begin the world again.'

'For myself I don't care, but for you, T——'

'For me?' She looked wistfully at him for a while, and then said, 'If I were young and strong, and this came on us, I would not blink, but say, that at your dear side I would face the world. We would go somewhere—anywhere—together, and your hands and mine together would avail to find us bread. But now, Percy, it is too late. All my strength is spent, my confidence is gone.'

She turned the paper over and over with her waxlike fingers.

'Percy!' she continued after a pause, 'I knew about this, but you have little idea how I strove to obtain it, and what I did to get it.'

'Why, T——?'

'Why? Oh, I was so afraid of it being produced, when you, who are so happy here, and so completely now in the right place, would be thrown out with nothing.'

'My darling, I fall on my feet everywhere. I do not require much to be happy, so long as I have you and Justin.'

'You do not require much, but you do require something, and what have you got?'

He did not answer. In his careless manner he had not thought out the consequences to himself.

'And, T—— darling, if you had got this will, what would you have done with it?'

'Burnt it.'

'Then I am glad you never did get it. That would not have been right.'

'But Jane would have nothing to say to it. Even the bribe

of Curgenven would not induce her to accept the position as a condition for receiving it. Who was harmed ?'

'That was not the question. It was Lambert's will.'

'Yes, Lambert's will.' She turned the paper over on her lap. 'I have read it through. It was written under the supposition that I was alive, and had made my presence known and felt. Not a word, from beginning to end, of love, of consideration for me. Not one farthing left to provide necessaries for this real wife, the woman he had sworn to cherish, for richer for poorer—whom he had vowed to endow with all his worldly goods. All was to go to the other woman, to indemnify her for the fraud he had committed on her, as if no fraud had been committed on me in deserting me, a poor young thing, in leaving me helpless in the world, and not asking even what became of me. I had no reason, Percy, to respect his wishes.'

'My dear, Lambert is dead.'

'Yes, he is dead.'

A pause ensued. She was looking straight before her into vacancy.

'It seems to me plain as daylight, T——,' said Percival. 'Old Lambert had this property left him unreservedly, and he could give it to whom he chose. He intended it to go to Alice. That was his wish, and he had a right to leave it to her. Now I know that for certain, I will clear out whenever required. I can always accommodate myself to circumstances.'

She gave him back the will, and said :—

'You, with your clear eyes, always see what is right. Yes, do as you think best. I was wrong, very wrong to meddle in the matter ; but I did it for all your sakes. I loved you—not Jane—you and Justin.'

The servant tapped at the door.

'The Rector and Mrs. Lambert Curgenven are in the drawing-room.'

'I will be down at once,' said Percival. 'Good-bye for a few minutes, T——. I'll give old Pam and his daughter the will, and pack off young Fizz, then I will be up with you again.'

'I wish to see the Rector and Jane.'

'They shall come with me.'

She held his hand.

'I am so sorry, so sorry, dear Percival. I have another great trouble for you.'

'Troubles do not oppress me greatly,' said Mr. Curgenven, and left the room.

As Percival entered the parlour, the Rector stepped forward with a benignant smile, 'How are you, my dear Percival, and how is your wife? I hear a bad account of her from everyone. What is it? Has she caught a chill?'

'I have brought you something that will astonish you,' said Percival, not answering the questions. He caught an eager look in Jane Curgenven's eye, and thought, perhaps unjustly, that she was hoping the news relating to Theresa would be bad—had come there with the desire to hear she was in danger. Why, otherwise, that keen flash in her eye?

Percival was prejudiced, and he would not shake hands with her, or notice her; he spoke to her father alone.

'That old fellow, Physic, left his debts and his receipts, his bills and banking account, to a snob of a nephew who won't take on the business. This fellow has been rummaging in Physic's desks and cupboards, and has come on the paper that I hold. You shall look at it. Physic said something about it to me, but I thought it was all gammon, and gave it no great heed. However, here the document is. I have just shown it to Theresa. Physic had been scaring her with it, so she says. Look, it purports to be a will of Lambert, in which he leaves everything to Alice. I suppose it is all right. You take it and read it over between you. I have left the young Fizz in the breakfast-room with the spirit case open, and I must see to him.'

Then Percival left the apartment.

Mrs. Jane pursed up her lips and planted her feet flat on the carpet.

'Now then, papa, what is this?'

'My dear,' said the Rector, looking at the paper which he held with one hand, whilst he combed out his whiskers with the other, 'it is just as I said; there was no doubt about it. Lambert had been married to—to—her.'

'He never was.'

'Of course, it is most dreadful to think it, and if I had had the very smallest suspicion——'

'Papa, never mind your suspicions, small or big. Read out that paper. Is it what Mr. Physic hinted about—a will that cast abominable reflections on me?'

'It is, my dear Jane, a will—— Excuse me till I look it over.'

‘Well, look it over then, and when you have done that, pass it on to me.’

The Rector, with a face very blank and combing vigorously with one hand, read the will. It was not long, and could be run through in half a minute.

‘Well, papa?’

‘Well, my dear, it is as I said. I really don’t know what to say. We shall have to come to some arrangement with Percival. The thing must not be talked about. I would not for a thousand pounds that it should get out that you had not been properly married.’

‘I was properly married. You married me yourself.’

‘Yes, dear, but then the first wife was alive.’

‘She was not alive.’

‘My dear, she really was. Here she is now—Percival’s wife.’

‘She never was Lambert’s wife.’

‘My dear, really you cannot maintain that. I wish, with all my heart, that it could be proved she had been his—his—the other thing, you know—and not his wife. That would have been a great comfort, a great consolation. But, you see, what with the register——’

‘That was a forgery.’

‘And with this will, signed by Lambert himself, there can be no doubt about it, no doubt whatever. He calls you by your maiden name, Jane Pamphlet, otherwise known as Jane Curgenven. It is very shocking, and to happen in my family it is almost sacrilege; and it will, should it become public, materially interfere with my advancement as well as my ministerial influence and efficacy. How can I, you see, Jane, reprimand in cases, unfortunate cases——’

‘Now, never mind all that, papa. Do you mean to tell me you believe this abominable paper to be a genuine document?’

‘Of course it is. There is Lambert’s signature—I know it very well—and it was witnessed by old Roger Morideg and James Pike. The paper is perfectly genuine. There, also, is Lambert’s seal with the Curgenven arms.’

‘Let me see it.’ Jane snatched the will from her father, and ran her eye hastily over it.

‘Good gracious! Oh, Jane! Oh, goodness! My dear Jane!’ Suddenly the Rector whirled about on his heels and faced a landscape in oils hanging on the wall. ‘This is certainly by Jeffrey. I know his style—these pale cobalt blues and creamy shadows,

and his foregrounds always weak. I could swear to that tree—so blotchy, and no particularisation about the rocks in front. Yes, certainly by Jeffrey.'

Then in came Percival.

'Will you both come up to Theresa's room?' he asked. 'I've packed off that little snob, sent him with Justin to look at the stables. Now then, come along, and bring the will with you.'

'The will!' gasped the Rector. 'Ahem! Percival, I've been studying this landscape. It is by Jeffrey, is it not?'

'The will!' said Jane, in defiant tone. 'There is no will.'

'Lambert's will I left with you.'

'That!' sniffed Jane—'that insolent document! It was a fabrication by Physic.'

'Never mind, I must have it.'

'You can't. *I've eaten it.*'

'Eaten it!'

'Every shred, every letter, and the sealing-wax as well.'

CHAPTER LIV.

ONCE MORE 'INVENI PORTUM.'

PERCIVAL introduced the Rector and his daughter into Theresa's room. Jane was startled and shocked at the change that had taken place in the wife of the Squire of Curgenven, and with a qualm at her heart she regretted certain bitter feelings she had of late yielded to and harsh words she had expressed. The greenish hue about the mouth, the wax-like whiteness, told a tale that could not be misunderstood. Theresa's eyes seemed extraordinarily large and dark, but they lacked the lustre usual in them.

The Rector was the first to approach her and hold out his hand. Theresa, however, did not take it.

'I will not,' she said, in a low tone. 'I would have you first know what I have to say. You are not aware to whom you offer your hand. If, after what you have heard, you care to give it me, I will take it with gratitude. I have been engaged——'

She pointed to the little table at her side, where she had been writing; a sheet of paper was thickly covered with characters.

'It is not now I have done it. I saw it must come. I have written a little one day—or night, then a little more. It is done

now, all but my signature, and that I wish to add whilst you are here, that you may know what I have to confess.'

'To confess!' said the Rector, with a quiver in his voice. 'I'm not a party man. I particularly object to anything that may be said to savour, to—to wear an aspect—to——'

'But really, papa,' said Jane, in a hard voice, 'really, papa, there is nothing to alarm you in this. It is a written confession, I understand, she wishes to have witnessed.' In an undertone she said, 'Papa, do be sensible. It is all coming out now about that affair with Lambert. I knew it would.'

'My dear, it is an affair I wish to hear nothing about. It cannot be wholesome. I never allow myself to hear of anything that might not come out of or go into *Peep of Day*, or *The Dairyman's Daughter*, or any other very good work suitable for children and bedridden old women.'

'Papa, you really must. It is to save my reputation.'

'But—but—if people talk, *my* reputation will suffer.'

'Papa, I insist.'

'My dear, if it must be! Oh, I wish I had never come here!' Combing his whiskers with both hands, he stepped slowly toward Theresa, and said resignedly:

'Well, what is it, then, my dear Mrs. Curgenven?'

'Mrs. Percival,' was the correction thrown in by Jane.

'I feel,' said Theresa, slowly, as a faint colour came to her cheeks in two spots, 'I feel that the time has come when it is my duty to tell all I know.'

'My dear T——,' Percival was at her side, 'can you not put this off to some later period? You really are not strong enough to bear anything that may excite you. Tonks said you were to be kept quiet; I was to amuse you, but not worry you.'

'It would worry me, Percy, if I were not allowed to speak. I have felt convinced for some little time that all efforts to conceal the truth were in vain. That faithful, devoted girl, Esther, has done what she could.'

'That has nothing in the world to do with it,' said Jane bluntly. Theresa turned and looked at her.

'How, nothing?'

'Nothing with that affair of Lambert.'

'I do not understand you. Esther knows all about the death of Mr. Physic.'

'We know that very well,' said Jane; 'and now I am glad to

hear she has been arrested. High time! In our nineteenth century—to give the police the slip! It was preposterous. They did not half look for her.'

'I hear that she is under arrest, and charged with the murder of Mr. Physic,' said Theresa.

'Yes, it is so.'

'She was not guilty. She had nothing to do with it. She held his horse at a distance, that is all.'

'But how can you tell, T——?' said Percival. 'My dear, what is the meaning of this? If Esther be innocent, of course, she will be discharged. You need not fret yourself about her.'

'She must be discharged. She had no hand in it whatever. She drew suspicion to herself to save me.'

'You, T——?'

'Yes. I had done her a little kindness. She is a warm-hearted, grateful creature; and to draw away suspicion from me——'

'But, my dear T——, suspicion could not possibly attach to you! You were ill at home, confined to your room.'

'I was there—for all that; I was there, on the moor at Tolmenna.'

'It is not possible!'

'It is true. I took the pistol from the Bungalow, I——'

'Stay, stay!' cried the Rector; 'I will hear no more. This is most dreadful. I would not for the world! There would be so much talk. It—it might interfere——' He ran to the window, seized the curtain and wrapped it round his head, muffling eyes and ears. Through the folds could be heard a mutter of words, but whether these were 'advancement' or 'ministerial efficacy' could not be distinguished.

Jane Curgenven went after her father.

'Papa, be reasonable. Do pay attention. You must come out of that.' She endeavoured to unwrap his head, but the more she strove to release him the further he wound himself up, till his head resembled a vast cocoon of a silkworm.

Finding her efforts unavailing, and unwilling to lose a word of what was being said by Theresa, she turned back to the chair of the sick woman. Theresa looked round with a face full of distress and plea for mercy.

'I shot him!' she said.

A dead silence ensued. Percival and Jane were too much

astonished to speak. Neither quite believed that Theresa was in her senses. They thought that she was labouring under an hallucination.

'I knew that he had that will. I did not wish my dear, dear husband to be thrown out of Curgenven to struggle with the world for a livelihood. For myself, I could not face the prospect. I was weary, weary to death of the voyage against contrary winds; beaten, battered by storm. I had not the strength, not the self-confidence, not the courage. I—I could not, no, I could not go back to what had been. Alone it would have been bad, but with Percival worse. Mr. Physic offered to sell me the will for the family jewels.'

'Not those diamonds of Lady Margaret's?' gasped Jane.

'The family jewels,' repeated Theresa. 'I could not give them up, and yet I could not let him keep the will. I tried to frighten him. I can't tell you all—it is written here. I have put it in this paper at length. But I solemnly assure you I did not know the pistol was loaded; I thought merely to threaten Mr. Physic. You, Mr. Pamphlet, advised me——' She looked round. 'Where is the Rector?'

'Never mind, he can't hear,' said Jane; 'that is to say, he doesn't choose to hear.'

'I thought it was the last blast of the storm, and then I would be at peace. I was weary—I wanted rest. I—I never meant it—I——'

'Theresa, dear, do not distress yourself,' said Percival, going to her. She was sinking in her chair. The slight colour had gone out of her cheeks. She was death-like in her whiteness.

'Will you take my hand, Percy? there is blood on it. But I never, never meant to kill him. It was rest from care and battle that I wanted. I had fought and toiled all my life. Everyone was against me; no, not everyone, you loved me.'

Percival seated himself on the elbow of her chair, put one arm round her to hold her up, and clasped her hand.

She was silent for some while, breathing heavily, and gathering her failing, scattered senses.

'Percy, where is the table?'

'Here, love.'

'I want to sign it all.'

'I pray you be calm, and do not concern yourself about it.'

'I must do it. Esther is in prison.'

'No, not in prison, dear.'

'She is very ill, and the police have taken her. Give me the pen—where is it?'

She turned in her chair and groped for the paper and pen; her sight was failing.

'Have you dipped it? Hold me, Percy; hold me up whilst I write.'

She took the pen and bowed her head over the paper on which she had written the story of what she had done.

Jane drew near and watched eagerly.

Theresa was writing laboriously; she seemed not to be able to see the letters she was forming. Then her head sank upon the table, and she lay heavily on Percival's arm.

'Oh, Jane,' gasped he, 'she has fainted!'

'She is dead!' said Jane, and drew the paper from under the white face, and looked for the signature. It was not there. In straggling characters the words were written, and still were wet: '*Inveni portum.*'

CHAPTER LV. •

THE RIGHT MEN IN THE RIGHT PLACES.

'Of all the owls that inhabit the British Isles,' said Justinian, 'commend me for sheer owliness to the police force and the magistracy—present company excepted,' he conceded, waving his hand towards his father. 'I may add, a British coroner and jury. In the first place, these latter found that old Physic had been shot by Esther, and now these former have proved that she did nothing of the sort. If they had stopped there, it would have been well—but they have gone on to declare that he shot himself.'

'Why, Justin, old fellow, that was your own theory.'

Justinian was a little staggered. It had been his theory, and he had proclaimed the police owls for not adopting his view. However, he speedily recovered his self-satisfaction and balance, and said, 'Yes, till I knew better or worse, as you like to take it. It was not my profession or duty to investigate the matter, and on a superficial acquaintance with it I came to that conclusion which a sound intelligence would arrive at on such data; but when I began to go into the matter, then I speedily found it wouldn't wash. I gave my evidence sharp and to the point—not a word too much. Just what I was asked and no more. Had I observed the pistol hanging in the rack an hour before the fatal affair? I

had. What opportunity had I for arriving at this conviction? The best: I had gone into the Bungalow to fetch my gun. Where had I gone with my gun? To Cartuthers, to Sir Sampson's. He had a shooting party—only rabbits. Anything more? "Nothing more, thank you," from the bench. So I left the box. Aunt Jane went through her performance, I must say, though I don't like her, well. She had jumped to conclusions on wrong premisses, no doubt about it. She had jumped to conclusions hastily, and it was all her doing that the coroner found what he did, or he and the jury, rubbing their stupid noddles together. She got out of it very well. She said just what was wanted, and no more. She told how Esther had come bouncing down on her with the pistol, and had said that with it Physic had been shot. At once, as she admitted, she had rushed to the conclusion that Esther had done the deed; she now admitted that the conclusion was hardly justified. Esther had not exactly said she had done the deed, but that the pistol had done it, a statement quite compatible with the theory that he had shot himself.'

'And then, I suppose, the lodge-keeper was put in the box?'

'No, dad, that fellow Pike next, and he made mental prancings and buck-jumping. He involved himself in all kinds of contradictions, and the bench—Sir Sampson was chairman—had to warn him. I don't think he meant any harm, but that he was intellectually incapable of giving a straight answer. There you have the difference between culture and absence of culture.' Whereas I——'

'Yet you deceived the bench just as much as he.'

'I, gov.? Not I. I said what was true—true down to the ground. Had they asked me whether my stepmother had had any finger in the matter, I should have been bound to say what I knew; I could not tell a lie even to save the reputation of the Curgenven family. But not a trace of a suspicion entered their obfuscated noddles that she was out that day, and had met Physic at Tolmenna. Unasked I was not going to tell them—not I. The Curgenven name must not be stained; besides, it was of no use now the dear mother is no more. I would spare her memory as I would save our name. Everything came out pat and to the point. The lodge-keeper had seen Physic ride his cob in at the gates. The butler had answered the door when he came to inquire how Mrs. Curgenven was. He told the butler it had reached him that she had had a fit; Turbot did not send up to inquire, but

answered off-hand, that his lady was slightly better, but confined to her room. Then the keeper saw him near the Bungalow. The next thing heard of him was that he was shot at Tolmenna. He was going to open a mine there, you know. Well, dad, it came out before the bench that old Physic's affairs were in a very bad state, and that there was going to be an inquiry into the way in which he had managed the Camden property. It seems probable that this frightened him. He dared not await exposure. Since his death, frauds have been detected. Then Esther must have seen him shoot himself; she was awfully droll at the petty sessions. There was no getting a word out of her. That is to say, she kept on repeating, "I'll die game, I sha'n't speak nothing," and she kept her word. Sir Sampson, and the rest of the bench, thought she was an idiot or a savage, and gave her up in despair. But they did not in the least believe, after the evidence, that she had shot Physic, and so they discharged her.'

'How is the poor girl?'

'She is better. She has been awfully ill, but she is picking up now. The Tregaskis family, brother and sister, have been good to her, and keep her with them till she is quite recovered; but they say she is impatient to be back on the moors again.'

'Justinian, old boy, there is a matter I want to talk over with you, but I haven't had the heart since my dear T——'s death.'

'Governor, at the petty sessions the bench, I believe, passed a resolution of condolence with you on your loss.'

'That's all very fine, but why did not their wives come and call on T——? It was the doing of that Jane, I am convinced. I do not know what Jane said, or left unsaid, but she set all the women against her. Dear T—— felt it—felt it keenly; it half broke her heart, I am sure of it. Now you'll see—after about six months they'll come calling, or making their husbands come to visit me. I'm disengaged now, and may be captured. In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird; and not one of those women who turned up their noses at my T—— shall set foot in this house if I can help it. That's my last word. Justin, I give you full leave to shoot me if I go from it. No, put me in an asylum, I shall be fit for that if I so far forget what is due to her dear and honoured memory. Justin, old chap, it has been my lot to have at my side two of the best of women, and both Bohemians, as I suppose society would label them. Admirable women both; 'pon my word, Justin, I was not worthy of either.'

‘What is it that you wanted to consult me about?’ asked Justinian.

‘Oh, I forgot! It is this, boy. I gave you a sort of a rough idea of how matters stood about the property. I’m hanged if I think I have any right to be here, and yet what am I to do? Jane will have none of it. I told you the reason. Besides, she has eaten the will. How she got it down I can’t think. And there was a seal too, the Curgenven arms. But a woman of that sort will do anything—has the stomach of an ostrich and the conscience of a giraffe. What is to be done? I don’t feel that in honour I ought to be here—and yet legally I am squire—that is, without the eaten will. Really, the place belongs to Alice, or will belong to her when she is of age. I can act as trustee. I believe old Lambert did want me and Jane to be the trustees, but then, when Alice is of age, I shall be bound in honour, I feel, to clear out and make way for her, and of course she will be snapped up by some young fellow, and I must find some other berth.’

‘Oh! you need not concern yourself, governor. I am glad you have consulted me, and I happen to be the person—the only person—who could put you to rights. I am going to marry Alice.’

‘You, Justin!’

‘Why not? It is all settled between us. I shall be of age next year, and Alice eighteen, so we can be married right off then. You can have the Bungalow fitted up for yourself, or stay here with us—just as you like. You will be most heartily welcome. Always a knife and fork for you, gov.’

‘Upon my word——’

‘That settles every difficulty.’

‘Upon my word, I’ll have you on the Commission as soon as ever you are of age. By George! you’ll be a model J.P., and Chairman of Board of Guardians, and all that sort of thing. The square man in the square hole at last.’

‘Papa, really I cannot conceive how you could do it?’

‘Do what, my love?’

‘Preach a funeral sermon on that woman.’

‘My dear, I could not help myself. She was squires, and if I had not done so, people would have talked.’

‘I could not have done it.’

‘I dare say not, my dear. But, Jane, you are not in my place, have not my responsibilities. I have been ordained, and set apart

for the special office and function of giving no offence to any man, that the ministry be not blamed, and I flatter myself that I do my duty. I give offence to none. Besides, in the matter of the funeral sermon, I dealt in generalities.'

'The text itself was outrageous. I turned white and red.'

'The text was perfectly harmless. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." It was a question. If that were turned into Latin, one would be in difficulties. For if a *num* were employed, it would at once imply that no such person was to be found. Happily our language is sufficiently vague to allow of leaving the question open.'

'But it *did* imply that she was a virtuous woman, and that is precisely what you know she was not.'

'I know nothing. Whatever may have been said whilst my head was wrapped up in the curtain, I, of course, cannot tell. Knowing nothing, I could use that text; and even if I had known anything against her, by throwing the stress of my voice on *can* and *virtuous*, I could have implied, had I chosen, that she was not all she might have been. But I did not choose—I could not offend Percival. And Justinian is just as peppery and ready to fire up at a word of disparagement of his stepmother as is Percival.'

'If I had known you were going to preach that sermon, I would not have gone to church. How about a monument in the Curgenven aisle? You will not allow that?'

'I cannot refuse.'

'Then charge treble fees.'

'Nor can I do that legally.'

'Then insist on seeing the inscription. And, for mercy's sake, have no fibs on that; and no texts of Scripture exalting the deceased into being a saint. That, at least, you can legally prevent.'

'Percival has been to me already about the monument, and has written out what he thinks a suitable inscription. Here it is.'

Jane Curgenven ran her eyes over the paper her father presented to her.

'Well—the dearly beloved wife—I suppose he did care for her. There are queer tastes in the world. He has the grace not to say of whom she was the daughter, for I suppose he knew no more than anyone else. And for text, what is that? It is Latin.'

'Yes, *Inveni portum*: I have found harbour.'

Jane returned the paper. 'It will do ; but, papa, how could you take the text you did with its allusion to the jewels?'

'My dear, why not?'

'The jewels, papa ; why, surely you have not forgotten? The Curgenven jewels lost—made away with. It is monstrous. She had some cock-and-bull story to account for their disappearance, no doubt. The fact is, the jewels are gone—made away with. Were they pawned? Were they sold? Who pocketed the money? You may depend upon it there is some ugly story behind the disappearance of the jewels. Lady Margaret Curgenven's diamonds gone! It is too horrible. I wish to goodness now I had not left them at the house. I thought I was in conscience bound to do so, and I did it. Now they are all gone, and you talked of jewels in connection with her and her virtue in church. Really, papa, there is a limit to charity.'

'My dear, I made no definite statement. I never do, I envelop all I say in a cloud of generalities, or take the edge off everything that appears to be a definite statement by qualifications with "but" and "if." I trust that no one can say that I have ever given anyone anything that he could lay hold of. And—but here come the letters.'

The Rev. Mr. Pamphlet opened the first.

'My dear, here is my reward. An archdeaconry and canonry. I really do think I have deserved them, and that I shall be the round man in the round hole.'

CHAPTER LVI.

'CIVILISATION BE BLOWED.'

THE bells were pealing. A twelvemonth was past, and Justinian was married to Alice.

The rectory was crowded with friends and acquaintances. To attend at breakfast the butler Turbot and a footman had been brought from the Hall. The Venerable the Archdeacon strutted about in gaiters and corded hat, bowing, smiling, saying agreeable things to everyone. He had hopes that if he remained absolutely colourless, the way was open to him to become a bishop.

'Well, Percival, a proud day for you, to see your son and heir married. How are you? You don't look over cheerful.'

Hang it, Archdeacon, no! I can't forget T——. It would have pleased her.'

'You must not look back. By the way, you'll be gratified to hear that Mrs. Jordan has joined the Church. Since I have given her my washing, she has left the Particular Baptists, and is now regular in her attendance on my ministrations.'

'I say, my dear Archdeacon, what is the tale I hear about Tregaskis?'

'I really cannot inform you. The man has not attended my humble ministrations for some time, and I hear is leaving or being turned out of the police force. I have visited him, and I regret to say that I found him in a condition of demoralisation very painful to contemplate. Demoralisation is, perhaps, too strong a term, but what I mean is resentment against—recalcitration against everything that I and Jane and all right-thinking people cherish. I mean our nineteenth-century civilisation, that network of silk that enfolds and, perhaps—well, perhaps embarrasses us, but it is for our good. I said something to him on the advantages of civilisation, and his response was neither elegant nor grammatical. He said civilisation be—I cannot complete the sentence. To repeat what is neither elegant nor grammatical might interfere with my pros—I mean my archidiaconal weight. It was something that is done to soap-bubbles. Who is that? What is that noise, Turbot?'

'Beg pardon, Mr. Archdeacon, there's Esther Morideg has come in at the front door, right in among the gentlefolks, and never rung nor nothing. She says that she wants—Mr. Archdeacon—to see Miss Alice. I beg pardon—meaning Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.'

'What is that? What is that?' exclaimed Jane, who was near; then in her energetic, determined manner she rushed into the hall, and there found Esther making her way through the guests, in spite of the remonstrances of John Thomas, the footman.

'I reckon I'm as good a friend o' Miss Alice as any o' these fine folk here,' said the girl. 'Where be she? I want to speak wi' her, and I've gotten sum'ut for her too.'

'Esther, what's the meaning of this?' exclaimed Mrs. Jane Curgenven. 'This is intolerable. In at the front door! If you want anything, go to the back. But you are not wanted. This is no place for you, and I can't have you bothering the servants either—they are all engaged.'

'You'r'n't going to turn me out o' this as you turned me out o' the park at the school treat!' said Esther, defiantly. 'I be growed big since then.' She tossed her shoulders. 'I know this, I wi'nt go. I wi'n't go till I ha' seed Miss Alice. Her and I be fast friends, and I ha' gotten sum'ut for her.'

'What is that? Why, goodness——' Jane tried to snatch a box from under Esther's arm. 'That's the Curgenven jewel case. Esther! what right have you to that? Where did you get that?'

'Where I got'n, and how I got'n, is naught to you. I'm bringing it for Miss Alice.'

'Give it to me at once, I insist. That box has been lost for a twelvemonth—it was made away with. You stole it. I'll have you summonsed. Give it up to me instantly.'

'I wi'n't,' said Esther, defiantly. 'Why should I? I'll give it, I reckon, to Miss Alice—her's the true Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven now. The butler chap said so. I reckon you've no more to do wi' it than he has. I'll gie it to the proper Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven, and none other.'

At that moment Alice, in her travelling dress, descended the stairs. In a moment she saw Esther, and came to her with both hands extended. 'My dear Esther! I am so delighted. You, too, have come to wish me happiness. That was the only thing wanting to make me quite happy. Come along with me upstairs, and I will show you all the pretty things that kind friends have given me.'

She led Esther away out of the throng to her room.

'Now, Esther,' she said, 'sit down and tell me all about yourself. You are quite well again now?'

'Yes, I reckon I'm just as I was. And see here, Miss Alice, I've brought you all the Curgenven diamonds and pearls, and other beauties. They was lost, but I had 'em. And yet I'd clean forgot all about 'em. You know I was cruel bad wi' fever, and then I dun' know I niver gave a thought to 'em, till I heard as you was a goin' to be married, and then all to once they jumped into my head. I had 'em all under a floor-stone to Tolmenna. I reckon there ain't one lost. No one niver has touched 'em since I put 'em there. There, that's brave, on your weddin' day I can give you a better present than all them beautiful things the grand folk ha' given you.'

'And you wish me all happiness, dear Esther.'

'Ees, I reckon I do. It's I, too, as made it all come about.'

Didn't I put your hands together through the hole at Tolmenna? Well, folks as ha' done that, they're sure joined more nor any parson or registrar can make 'em. That be how Tregaskis and I is goin' to be married.'

'Esther! Tregaskis going to marry you? The constable!'

'No—I reckon it's I be going to marry Tregaskis. But he's no constable no more, soas!'

'What, has he left the force?'

'I'll just tell 'ee all about it,' said Esther, seating herself. 'Tregaskis be cruel sweet on me; he hev' took a fancy to I ever sin' I were i' fever i' his sister's and his house. I can't blame him. He ain't a bad 'un now he's seed the error o' his ways, and found liberty.'

'What do you mean, Esther?' Alice had some little acquaintance with the quaint revivalist cant that pervades all the working classes in Cornwall, but she did not see how this exactly applied to the constable. 'Surely Mr. Tregaskis has always been a most exemplary man?'

'He's been terrible under the law, as folks say,' answered Esther. 'But I'm right glad to say now, Miss Alice, he's found liberty.'

'But, my dear Esther, I do not understand you.'

'It's easy though,' said the moor girl. 'When Tregaskis told the sergeant he were going to be married to I, then they kicked up such a bobbery. They said it would bring disgrace on the force, and they—that's the sergeant and the superintendent—wouldn't have it, and they'd have Tregaskis moved off somewhere to the hinder end o' Cornwall. Well, Tregaskis wouldn't stan' this, and so it come about that it was he must go out o' the force, or do without I; and nat'rally he couldn't do that, so he's no more a perleceman, and under the law. And he says he's cruel glad, and feels lighter and easier already; it's like a burden lifted off his heart. He had to be always on duty, and walkin' the rounds night and day, meetin' other perlece, and all for no good at all. And then he was that tight squedged up i' his uniform, and his poor head boxed up i' a sort of helmet. It were the bondage of Egypt. But he's found liberty now, and is out o' it all.'

'But what is Tregaskis going to do?'

'Nothing, that's just it,' answered Esther, cheerily. 'Granfer, and he, and I be a goin' to build up Tolmenna once more. It seems old lawyer Physic hadn't no proper title to the land, or sum'ut's gone wrong, and I reckon nobody knows exactly whose it is,

or p'raps it be gone back to the lord o' the manor. Anyhow, we's goin' to tumble the old place together again; us can do it in a couple o' days.'

'Yes, that is all very well; but for a livelihood?'

'Us don't want a terrible deal on the moor—no more nor does long cripples (snakes), or horniwinks (peewits). But it'll make gran'mother easy i' her mind; you know her couldn't die i' peace wi'out giving up her secret to somebody, and her 'll give it to Tregaskis, and I reckon he'll pick up a shilling or so in charmin' warts, and tellin' fortunes, and strikin' king's evil, and blessin' wounds, and staunchin' blood and so.'

'But, Esther, this is a wonderful change in Mr. Tregaskis—a policeman to become a White witch.'

'Ees, I reckon it be,' said Esther, in a tone of triumph. 'But he sez, sez he, wi' a crow like a cock, "Civilisation be blowed." He be a changed creature—that he be, I do assure you, miss; you'd say so, if you see'd him now.'

'Why, what is he about now?'

'He's a tearin' up o' his clothes, his uniform, you know, and he's chuckin' all the buttons with the crown on 'em into Trewortha marsh, where a twelvemonth ago he runned arter me, and tumbled in, up to his chin, i' the bog water.' Esther went off into a fit of laughter. 'Bless'y, Miss Alice, us be goin' to have a figgy (plum) puddin' to our weddin', and us be a goin' to bile 'n i' his helmet. The young squire said I was to tak' what sticks I liked out o' the Curgenvon woods, and we'll bile our puddin' on them sticks and a few clots o' turf. 'Twill be brave.'

'The carriage is at the door,' said the servant, after knocking.

'Now really, Esther, I must go, Good-bye, give me a kiss.'

'You'll come and see me and Tregaskis, won't you?' pleaded the wild girl.

'Dear Esther, yes, but only on one condition—that you are married in church. Passing the hands through the hole in the stone may satisfy you and the ex-constable, but not me. Promise me that.'

'Very well, I'll do that just to oblige you,' said Esther, resignedly, 'but it's terrible like going under the law again. I'll do it. I'll tell'y somethin' more as 'll make'y laugh. Rainy days, and when us has got nothin' to do, Tregaskis and me 'll knock each other about the heads wi' his truncheon, just for exercise, and to amuse granfer and gran'mother.'

‘I really must go,’ said Alice, and descended the stairs, attended by Esther.

‘What, you still here!’ exclaimed Jane. ‘I thought I had ordered you out of this house. Really, Alice, you must not encourage this girl.’

‘Now you leave she alone,’ said Esther, ‘it’s no concern of yourn. And I tell’y I’ll walk wi’ my young man about i’ the park, and nobody shall say “Get out” now. You ar’n’t nothin’. Her’s Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.’

The carriage drove away, the slipper was thrown, rice was showered. The Archdeacon and Jane Curgenven stood in the drive looking after the carriage.

Jane uttered a little groan. ‘I never, never thought *that*, or I never would have consented.’

‘What, love?’

‘That my child, that chit, should take precedence over me, and be Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.’

THE END.

IN THE NEW FOREST.

It is no doubt owing to the strictness with which game laws have been enforced that a sanctuary is provided for so many of our creatures that would otherwise be ruthlessly shot at by those men—butchers we might call them—who go out from our towns for to kill and destroy something or other, they reck little what. If game should ever come to be left to itself, or to the tender mercies of the masses, it would be a sorry day for all animated nature in our land. Landowners as well as gamekeepers are certainly becoming actuated more and more by enlightened views in respect of those creatures that have so long been classed as vermin. In the New Forest of late, since the keepers have been debarred from shooting all wild things—sparrow-hawks excepted—the birds and beasts have multiplied greatly.

To watch wild life, furred or feathered, one must of course be on foot, alone, and have a good field-glass in hand. For general purposes, however, I found a low pony carriage—which I hired at Mudeford—a most convenient vehicle for moving about in the direction of the forest. This is worthy of mention on account of its owner and driver, who seemed to have relatives scattered all over the district, with whom he ‘passed the time of day’ very frequently during a morning’s drive. His reminiscences, suggested at various points, were very interesting to one like myself who likes to study humans as well as birds and animals. The church he attended as a boy he showed me with much pride. Hand in hand, and two by two, he said, the school children went on Sunday; the boys first, in smock-frocks, white trousers, and straw hats, and the girls behind, in straw bonnets, white tippets, and print frocks; these being always an annual present from the rector or vicar. And there on Sunday the choir is still composed of boys and girls, the latter dressed alike in cottage bonnets and white tippets.

My friend had been in the police force in his younger days, and was for some time in Charles Kingsley’s parish. This was in the times of the Chartist troubles, and the vicar of the adjoining parish having been mysteriously murdered, the act was ascribed to these agitators. A watch was therefore appointed at the various

vicarages round, and it fell to our friend to be stationed at that of Charles Kingsley. The old man dwelt with much pleasure on the kind thoughtfulness of that Broad Churchman and muscular Christian in seeing that he always got a good supper and breakfast, saying that the vicar used himself to rouse up the cook extra early so that he might not have to leave without the latter. After all, it was found that the Chartists were innocent in the matter ; but the oddest part of the business, as the man said, was that the widow afterwards married the detective, a smart fellow who had been sent down from London to scent out the affair.

From Christchurch, as well as from Mudeford, one enters the New Forest by Hinton Admiral, passing the seat of Sir George Meyrick, whose fine estate reaches the confines of the New Forest at Forest Lodge. A wide expanse of heath and gorse, which is now one blaze of golden yellow, and later on will be purple with heather, stretches far away on the left to Burley and Bury Wood, which owes its name to the fact of its having been the burial-place of the soldiers slain in the seventh battle of King Arthur.

There is a certain beauty of wildness and desolation still present about this region. The trees, which are of great age, have many of them attained a majestic growth. The New Forest has a peculiar charm of its own, one that consists not so much in the grandeur of individual trees, but in the masses of wood, the long solemn aisles of trees, the groups of sombre yews contrasted with neighbouring whitethorn, the sylvan glades, purple-clad hills, and long stretches of heather and gorse. And here one finds oneself in company with Dame Nature in her best and most unspoiled aspects ; all is still so little changed, if, indeed, changed at all, since the times when the wolf and the wild boar ranged here. He ' rattles like a boar in a holme (or holly) bush ' is still a familiar saying with the forest dwellers. The turf is still cut by the squatter, in order to cure his bacon by its smoke ; the charcoal burner continues to follow his avocation as in the time of the Red King. A ' shade ' still means an *open* piece of ground or a pool ; generally it is on the top of a hill. When they say the cattle come ' to shade ' they mean they seek a spot where they are open to the cooling influences of water and breeze. The boys in their round smock-frocks are even yet bidden to ' lout to their betters.'

And through their winding courses the same streams flow as of old, licking out deep pools by the gnarled roots of oak and beech, washing over shallows of rolled and rounded pebbles ; the lily and

iris there still gladdening the eye, milkwort waving blue heads, wood-sorrel lifting its delicately veined cups, and wood-anemones hanging their fair heads, as they have done for centuries. You might travel far and wide and not find such another combination of all that is lovely and also grand in scenery.

Some of the oaks in Boldrewood are very large; one that is twenty-four feet in girth is covered with a lichen—which, commonly known as the 'lungs of oak,' is a common local remedy for consumption. Another supposed cure for the same disease is to kill a jay, and calcine it by placing it in the embers of a peat fire. At stated times of the year this is mixed with water and drunk by the patient.

Hares' brains are supposed still to be a useful tonic for children that have come into the world before their time. Children afflicted with fits are still passed through cloven openings in ash trees. A certain lichen again is used in a lotion for strengthening weak eyes; whilst the fat of the hedgehog is used to lubricate stiff joints. Bread baked on Good Friday, the forest folks believe, will keep good for seven years, and it will also cure certain complaints. The seventh son of a seventh son is supposed to be endowed with wonderful gifts in performing cures. This last idea is not peculiar to the New Foresters; in the midland counties it has a strong hold on the country folks. About the stoppage of blood flowing, from wounds or ruptured blood-vessels especially, there are some very peculiar beliefs in some parts, one being that the secret can only be transmitted by a man to a woman, and again by a woman to a man.

There is an amusing proverb in use here about upstarts: 'A dog is made fat in two meals.' A curious idea is prevalent in the forest about the death's-head moth; they believe firmly that this insect was never seen until after the execution of Charles the First.

There is scarcely a village or hamlet in the New Forest but has its pixy field or mead, or its pixy's cave. That mischievous spirit, which is known under the name of 'Laurence,' still obtains possession of those whom 'the gods wish to ruin.' 'Laurence has got on him,' they say of one who is lazy. A tricky fairy, the forest folk believe to this day, tempts their rough native ponies to stray. Also, they say that he lives in bogs, into which he entices the unwary. 'Colt pixies' such as he are termed; only the first-born may consider themselves to be free from his spell. The caterpillar is known, as in the days of the first translation of the

Bible into English, as the 'palmerworm.' A woodlander talks of feeling lear-like when he is hungry, using a corruption of the word 'learnes,' old English for emptiness, which reminds one of the German 'leer.' But one might fill pages with examples showing how much Nature, in 'humans' as well as in wild life, has been allowed to remain as she was so many generations ago. There is a potent charm about this old-world state of things which seizes on one, and seems for a time to fill one who enters the forest precincts with a sense of rest that is soothing to both heart and brain.

The poor little shrew is considered to be a creature of ill-omen by the peasants here; yet the shrews are supposed to die instantly if they attempt to cross a road where man has been, just as a witch is judged to be incapable of crossing running water. The bite of a female shrew in young is considered most dangerous, and even if she but runs over the limb of a horse or a cow, it will, they say, cause paralysis. If this catastrophe befall a beast, the forest farmer as soon as possible drags the afflicted animal through a loop of bramble—that is, a long spray that has rooted itself, or been rooted so intentionally, at both ends. This is often done by the end of a trailing branch being trodden into the ground by the hoofs of passing cattle. Another remedy is to rub the parts affected with the branches of a shrew-ash, that is an ash-tree which has been, in many cases, planted purposely near the farmstead, into which, when the trunk is large enough, a hole is bored with an auger, and then the poor little live mouse, or shrew, is thrust into this with many senseless incantations. The hole is plugged up, and the shrew thus buried alive.

The names of the forest villages are almost unchanged, and the natives of these are many of them descendants of Cerdic, who fought at Burley about the year 495 A.D. In that notable battle five battalions were slain between sunrise and sunset. And these people, as I have said, use old English words such as are now never heard elsewhere.

The raven still breeds here, as he did in ages past, although there are not so many pairs of them about as the many raven-trees testify to; yet he is far from rare. Mr. Hart, of Christchurch, who has from time to time kept many of the local birds as pets for a period, and then let them go free again, had once a tame raven which, after he had restored it to its native forest, used to meet him when it heard his familiar call, and accompany him and his gun, acting as a retriever for him.

The heron, which has been long at home in Vinney Ridge, is still here—a bird so noble and picturesque-looking as she sails quietly through the air, or when resting on her nest, where she now and again raises her head in alarm as some bird of prey passes in its flight overhead, or that ominous sound of the raven's hoarse croak reaches her ear.

On some branch the common buzzard has built its nest, which is scarcely left whilst you walk underneath. The bird feeds on carrion, small birds, mice, and frogs, varied by an occasional rabbit. When well fed, a buzzard will sit for hours motionless on some commanding position from which he could readily see any approaching danger. Since so high a price has been offered for the eggs of this bird, as well as for those of the honey-buzzard, his nest, open to view as it is, suffers much when the bark-strippers are at work, and fewer of the young are reared in the New Forest than formerly.

In many an old ivy-covered ruin of some once stately tree you may see the tawny owl, a bird by popular prejudice inseparably connected with the night and doubtful deeds, yet one that is really so little annoyed by the sunlight that you will usually find him sitting on the sunny side of the tree, with his body close up against its trunk. On your approach he will draw himself up erect, and still more closely to the tree, so that his colouring harmonises with the tones of the moss and lichen-covered bark to a degree that renders the bird almost invisible to any but a practised eye. The lichen, by the way, is always found growing on that side of the tree that faces south—a good hint, as some one has suggested, for the guidance of anyone who may lose himself in forest recesses. During March the owls nest, and during that month their weird and uncanny call might be heard in the daytime. During the nights of autumn the hooting is most heard; and many a nocturnal creature, as well as fish, is captured as the bird flies noiselessly through the air. The tawny owl is fond of his bath; you may watch him settle on a shallow, plunging and scattering the water in all directions as he goes through his ablutions. A sorry appearance he makes as he leaves the water for some old tree, on which he quickly dries himself. This species, there is no doubt, mates for life, and each year the same hole is tenanted by a pair. They commence to sit as soon as the first egg is laid, so that young birds and eggs are found in the same nest. These owls are very provident; after satisfying their wants the

birds always store the remains away in their larder. One of these larders a friend examined lately contained five voles, one rat, and three blind-worms.

The long-eared owl prefers shady pine-trees, and he is more gregarious in his habits, nesting in the thick branches of pine or some squirrel-drey. At dusk he issues forth, and then woe to any small mouse that his quick ear may detect moving in the grass. His hooting may be heard by the hour as he sits on some leafless bough.

The yaffingale, yaffle, or green woodpecker is amongst the feathered creatures what the peaceful hero of labour is in his own world, a pick and climbing-hooks being all he asks for. With these he is perfectly content to work for his daily food, and, more than that, he makes the woods ring with his yikeing laugh. On he plods, tapping this tree and that, and by the process of auscultation interrogates sounds, and selects for himself some rotten tree that is populated with insects. At times he is all excitement, crest erect; his tongue, which is furnished with little barbs on the tip, covered with a slimy substance, darts into the wood, and each time it is withdrawn some insect is imprisoned on the tip. The root of the tongue, by a muscular contraction, is slid round behind the ear and into the upper mandible, so that, the tip being withdrawn into the mouth, the insect is received in the throat. The green woodpecker always ascends the tree, and he makes a new nesting-hole each season, the old one being generally taken possession of by some species of tit. Two other woodpeckers frequent the forest, but they are more local—the little and the greater spotted woodpeckers. Unlike their more common relative, the latter of these two species uses some decayed branch for nesting purposes, enlarging a natural cavity till it pleases him.

The wryneck, which takes its name from the singular habit it has of twisting its neck about from side to side—'weet-bird' the country folks call it, on account of its cry—is a very common bird. For hours together in the early morning it can be heard calling, as it sits crosswise on some upper branch of a tree. On another tree a little creature that looks at first sight like a mouse rather than a bird is moving upwards, downwards, and sideways with equally agile motions, searching for insects. After he has found some suitable hole in a branch of a tree—and sometimes a hole in a wall is chosen for the purpose—he builds his nest and blocks up the entrance to it by skilful bird-masonry, using small stones and

elay. Only a small aperture for ingress and egress is left. As the name implies, he is very fond of nuts, and frequents hazel and beech woods, where, after picking from amongst the fallen leaves some nut, he carries it to a lateral branch, and resting the nut between the grooves of the bark, hammers at it until the shell splits and the kernel can be secured.

Jays and magpies are here in goodly numbers, the latter selecting some thorn or holm (holly) bush wherein to build its nest, one that has a thick and tangled mass at the base, as they know that from below, only, danger can come; the nest is so domed above with a canopy of thorns that all intruders are surely excluded from that quarter. Both jays and magpies have suffered much at the hands of keepers, yet the magpie especially renders good service in devouring much small deer that is hurtful to man's interests.

A very common visitor to the gorse districts is the grasshopper warbler. A skulking little bird he is, and only if one is able to get up with the sun is one likely to catch a glimpse of him as he reels out his monotonous song, sitting on the top of some bush.

Skylarks and woodlarks are found in the forest. 'Lulu,' our neighbours across the Continent call the latter bird, a name which is suggestive of its song, which it utters as it ascends from a branch, hovers in the air, and descends again.

The woodcutter at his work is a welcome friend in the most remote parts to the cheery robin. He hastens to greet him in the early morning, and remains near him, enjoying some crumbs from his meal, and hopping about as though he would let the labourer feel that some creature is interested in him and his lonely work in the forest.

Woodcutters' wives, at any rate, do not always appreciate the beauty of their forest homes. I was talking to one of these lately, and expressing my delight in her surroundings. 'I've hed enough on it,' she replied, 'eighteen years; 'tis desprit lonesome. Past them ugly trees is the road, but you'll surely lose your way comin' back if ye don't mark crosses with your stick as ye go.' 'Them ugly trees' were great Scotch firs, the red stems glowing in the sunlight. They were too sombre and not clothed enough probably to suit the untrained rustic mind.

Another friend of man, and of God Almighty, according to the well-known saw, is the cutty or wren, which is abundant here. This little troglodyte apparently makes a nest for himself, besides

that for his wife and family ; such a one is called a cock's nest, and to it the shrewd little fellow is supposed to retire to spend a quiet night by himself, near enough, however, to his family to supervise them. During the winter the wrens flock to man's dwelling-place, to congregate there in holes, especially in the thatch of cottages. As many as fifteen have been found huddled up in one place on the lee side of a cottage.

Leaving the more wooded districts—where numbers of thrushes and blackbirds are making the woods ring with the swelling cadence of song, and where the rich, wild notes of the nightingale, the notes of sedge- and reed-warblers, the cooing of the ring-dove, the crow of the pheasant, the churr of the churn-owl or night-jar, the distant croak of the corn-crake, all add a charm in their different hours—you pass to the open plains and valleys or bottoms, as they are termed. Around the ponds and through the watercourses innumerable footprints of the snipe can be seen, and the male bird may be heard, as he swoops downwards with half-closed wings, the air vibrating through the feathers causing that curious noise, heard especially towards evening and in the breeding season—'bleating' the rustics term it.

In mock battle the woodcock often disport themselves during the pleasant mild evenings, tilting one another with ruffled plumage ; but just now they are more sedate, having in most cases young with them. A mere depression in the ground serves as a nest ; the fallen fern leaves around quite hide them from view. They will not leave the nest until you are within a foot or so of it, and then they may rescue a little one from danger by clasping it between the legs and bearing it away to safety. They will, of course, carry their young in this fashion also to water, as the nest is usually on dry moorland, to be out of danger from their commoner foes.

Another, but a more wary bird, nests here—that is the curlew, for, although associated so much with the sea-coast, it is an inland breeder, and resorts to a heathy plain, where the four large eggs are laid under the shelter of some furze bush or tuft of grass. The curlew is ever on the watch for enemies, quickly greeting the intruder with his clear note of ker-lee, a warning cry which is taken notice of by all birds. They feed by the dark peaty pools on insects and their larvæ.

To the same forest ponds the teal will return year after year, nesting generally at some distance from them. When the little

ones are hatched out the parents lead them to the reed-fringed pool. Few sights are prettier than these beautiful little ducks, with the tender solicitude of the old birds for the safety of their young.

Many a fleet of duck can be seen on the ponds and lakes. These also nest amongst the gorse and heather, at times most curious sites being chosen. One Mr. Hart found was on the top of a hayrick ; he was not able to see a sight which would have been very interesting, that of the parent bringing the fluffy little birds down from that height of nine feet. The mallards take no part in caring for the young, they keep by themselves in small companies ; during the summer the drakes assume a dress similar to that of the ducks, only a little darker.

The blackcock is almost the only bird here belonging to the past. So scarce is he now that only rarely can you catch a glimpse of him, whilst he feeds on the berries of the mountain ash.

There is an indescribable charm about this varied scenery of wood and moor, which perhaps gives more pleasure than any other that I know. The eye delights itself in gazing on the large massive oaks, the tall, shapely beech stems, covered with lichen ; the sea of waving bracken or the flowing cotton-grass. Gentle undulations covered with heather are here broken by plains of greenest turf, over which is borne on the breeze the distant neighing of forest cattle, or the sound of the hurried flight of the wood-dove. And we sit and watch the shadows lengthen, and the haze of evening creep on, while the sun sinks beyond yonder Purbeck Hills, after flooding all things with a golden light that fills us with vague, mysterious presentiments of some coming morning of promise.

THE BISHOP'S NOMINEE.

'I do hope he will be a gentleman, my dear,' said the Rector's wife to her sister-in-law, with a look of anxiety.

'Whom do you mean, Jane?' asked Miss Belsize, in her peculiar bass tones.

'The new curate, of course.' Have you forgotten? He is coming to dinner to-night.'

'Oh! Anybody else coming?'

'No.'

'Then I should say the joint will be enough,' returned Miss Belsize with a meditative air. 'You won't want any side-dishes.'

Mrs. Belsize bit her lip, but made no reply. She thought of asking sarcastically how many potatoes she ought to provide, and only refrained because she was at heart afraid of her sister-in-law. The Rev. Charles Belsize, Rector of Bedminton, was himself afraid of his sister Elizabeth. So were a good many people whose fate brought them into contact with that lady.

The Rector's sister was just forty-two, and she was 'rather plain'—that is to say, she had a large aggressive nose, a long upper lip, a sallow complexion, and a trifling hirsute appendage which was not an adornment. She lived permanently at the Rectory; the reason being that a large part of her little fortune had been expended in helping to purchase the Bedminton living, on the tacit understanding that she would make the parsonage her home. The Belsizes, it may be observed parenthetically, were of good family, being in fact second cousins of the Earl of Oxton, but poor. Miss Belsize was at heart what schoolboys call 'a good sort;' but she was also a very managing person. She managed her sister-in-law so well that the poor little parsoness was sometimes tempted to wish that she had never been born, or that she had remained Jane Skinner to the end of her days.

The Rector was a stout, comfortable man of moderate views, and a gentleman. He sympathised with his wife, but always counselled her to let Elizabeth have her own way. 'It pleases her, my dear; and really it doesn't matter,' was his favourite formula for soothing his wife into compliance with some new demand on her patience. And 'poor Mrs. Belsize,' as all her friends called her, always gave way.

The new curate turned out to be a tall and rather bulky person, with a pasty complexion, clean-shaven except for a short section of stubbly whisker on either cheek. His eyes were small, dark, and set, as it were, on the outer surface of his face. His hair was black. It was parted in the middle, long, and wavy. His Roman collar was spotless. His long coat was of sound material and well-built. Such was the outward appearance of the Rev. Martin L. Noble.

'You are a moderate churchman, I believe, Mr. Noble?' asked Miss Belsize during dinner.

The curate smiled and bowed assent.

'I am very glad to hear it,' said the lady in her deep, bell-like voice. 'Do you approve of "Hymns Ancient and Modern?"' she queried, after a pause.

There was absolutely nothing to guide the examinee, not the slightest indication whether he would be required to bless or to ban the well-known hymn-book.

'I should not like to say that I approve of every word and every line——' he began, with an air of bland impartiality.

'I should think not, indeed!' burst out Miss Belsize.

The sailing course seemed now plain enough.

'There are hymns in that book,' continued the curate, with a solemn contraction of visage, 'which——' Here the speaker caught a look of annoyance on the Rector's face, and instead of saying, as he had intended, 'which have a distinctly Romanist tendency,' he substituted, with perfect self-possession, 'which no collection could very well spare.'

The Rector laughed in his sleeve, and the lady was but partially satisfied. But the new curate soon made Miss Belsize understand that his views exactly coincided with her own; and thereupon he advanced rapidly in the lady's favour. She lent Mr. Noble a copy of Miss Havergal's Poetical Works; and when the curate brought it back with many expressions of admiration for the poetry and of gratitude to her who had placed such gems within his reach, Miss Belsize went so far as to take a pen and write on the fly-leaf, 'Martin L. Noble, from his sincere friend and well-wisher, E. B.' Mr. Noble had already explained to the Rector's sister that his second name was Luther, but that he hesitated about using it, partly because he was unwilling to challenge comparison with so great a man, partly because Luther (not having the good fortune to be born an Englishman) countenanced some doctrines which were hardly scriptural. It will be seen from these

trifling circumstances that Miss Belsize and Mr. Noble were no way averse to each other's society; but whether the curate really had the courage, the foolhardiness one might say, to become a suitor for that lady's hand was not certain. Public opinion in the parish was divided on the question. The unmarried ladies between twenty-five and forty ridiculed the idea of the curate's having any serious intentions with regard to the Rector's sister. But there were other parishioners who shook their heads and smiled in a knowing way when the subject was broached in their hearing.

Speculation on the point was stopped, however, by an event of such transcendent importance that it eclipsed all matters of ordinary interest. A report reached Bedminton that the Prime Minister had selected the Reverend Charles Belsize to be Bishop of St. Ninian's; and the report turned out to be true. The fact was that the unexpected demise of two intermediate heirs had made it highly probable that the Rector of Bedminton would before long become the twenty-ninth Earl of Alderney; and the Premier, no doubt, judged that it would conduce to the dignity and glory of the Church if a lay and a spiritual peerage were united in the same person.

The newly appointed bishop quickly resigned his living, and in the course of a few weeks took up his residence at the palace at St. Ninian's along with his wife and sister. As for the duties at Bedminton, Mr. Noble continued to discharge them pending the appointment of a new rector. He naturally found it desirable to seek advice from his late rector pretty often on matters parochial; and as Bedminton was but a few miles distant from the cathedral city, Mr. Noble was nearly as often at the palace as he had formerly been at the rectory. It often happened that the Bishop was from home when the curate-in-charge came to seek counsel from him; and frequently, on these occasions, the multifarious duties which now devolved on Mrs. Belsize compelled her to leave it to her sister-in-law to entertain Mr. Noble. When this happened Mr. Noble seemed particularly well satisfied, and Miss Belsize also appeared to be well content.

One night, after this sort of thing had been going on for some time, Mrs. Belsize, with a very pleased look on her pretty face, hinted to her lord that perhaps it might be as well if he spoke a word or two to Mr. Noble.

'About what, my dear?' asked the Bishop, sleepily.

'Well, about Elizabeth, you know,' said the young matron, blushing a little as she spoke.

'Good gracious, Jan !' cried his lordship in much alarm, 'you don't mean that I should ask the man what his intentions are with regard to my sister ?'

'Certainly not,' responded his wife with some dignity. 'That would be absurd. Besides, it would be useless. His intentions, his hopes, I should rather say, are clear enough. Elizabeth and he understand each other perfectly. And, oh ! Charles, I am so glad !'

The prelate was not so enthusiastic. He quite appreciated the advantage of getting his sister to manage somebody else, instead of him and his wife ; but the Reverend Martin L. Noble was not exactly the kind of man he would have chosen for a brother-in-law.

'Are you sure ?' he asked dubiously.

'Oh, yes. Elizabeth told me to-day. "Mr. Noble and I understand one another perfectly." These were her very words.'

'Then, if she has made up her mind, why need I meddle ?'

'Because I think he seems to be in some doubt as to the Bedminton living. It is in Elizabeth's gift, you know ; and naturally she would present Mr. Noble. But he can't marry till he gets a living ; and as she is the patron I fancy he has a delicacy in broaching the subject to her.'

'Delicacy ? I shouldn't have thought—well, it *is* rather a delicate thing to ask a woman for her hand and a living at the same time ; and, as you say, he can't take the one unless he gets the other. I think all the more of Noble for his hesitating to speak under these circumstances. But Elizabeth should be able to—to make things clear to him. If *she* has made up her mind—that's the main point, you know.'

'Oh, yes ; I'm *sure* she has, Charles.'

'I will see her in the morning, then ; and, if she wishes it, I'll say a word to Mr. Noble from which he will be able to understand how the land lies. I suppose he really *has* been—eh ?'

'No one who has ever seen them together could have any doubt on *that* point,' said the Bishop's wife decisively ; and the matrimonial conference was at an end.

The Bishop, after a little consideration, made up his mind that the curate of Bedminton was as good a match as his sister was likely to make, and being keenly alive to the inconvenience of her remaining permanently at the palace, he took an early opportunity of saying a word or two to Mr. Noble.

'My wife tells me,' he said pleasantly, 'that you and Miss Belsize have seen a good deal of each other lately—have been a good deal in each other's company, in fact—ahem !'

The curate seemed confused, changed colour, ejaculated, 'Oh, my lord!' and murmured something indistinct.

'Well, that's all as it should be, I suppose. I don't know that I have any objection,' said the prelate, hurrying on to the other branch of his subject. 'But as to ways and means. Of course you know the living of Bedminton is in my sister's gift, as sole surviving trustee of—of a settlement; and I see no reason why she shouldn't present you.'

'Oh, my lord!' cried the Rev. Martin Noble, clasping his hands, 'you take a load off my mind! I could not bring myself to ask Miss Belsize for the preferment, while——'

'Just so,' said the good Bishop with a smile. 'It would have been awkward. I understand. But I think we may regard the matter as being settled now. And we shall be glad to see you at the palace any day next week—say Tuesday.'

'Thank you a thousand times, my lord. There is, however, one thing that occurs to me, which it might be well to mention. The Bishop of Warminster, I happen to know, is going to marry his daughter to the Vicar of Pendlebury, a Mr. Marks—a very excellent pr—clergyman, but hardly of sufficient standing in the diocese. It happens that the rectory of Wichgate, in the Warminster diocese, is vacant at present: the right of presentation belongs to the Bishop. He would like to present his future son-in-law; but he hesitates to do so, for reasons which—which I need not go into. He fears that people might say that a bishop's son-in-law——'

'I see—I see. Most ridiculous. All Radical cant and nonsense. As if a patron could not be more sure of his own flesh and blood—or, well, a man deemed worthy to be his son-in-law—than he could be of a stranger.'

'Certainly, my lord; most certainly.' (The Bishop was not quite sure, but he rather thought that there was a suspicion, a suggestion of *ing*, as if the curate had really said 'certingly.' It hurt him to think that his sister should marry a man to whom a suspicion of that nature could attach itself; but things had gone too far for him to recede.) 'Still, people say unpleasant things, which get into the newspapers, and tend to undermine a clergyman's influence for good.'

'Just so.'

'I fear that there might be talk of that kind about Mr. Marks, and it might do harm. Now, it has occurred to me that if Miss Belsize were to be so very kind as to present Mr. Marks to

Bedminton, and if at the same time your lordship would be so good as to mention my name to the Bishop of Warminster in connection with the living of Wichgate——’

‘I see—I see. Virtually an exchange of livings between you and this Mr. Marks. By this means a good deal of ignorant, spiteful talk might be prevented—eh? I’ll think it over; and, if my sister approves of the plan, I’ll ask my brother of Warminster’s chaplain to come over and have a chat with me. I have no doubt that things can be arranged. Miss Belsize presents Mr. Marks to Bedminton; the Bishop of Warminster gives you Wichgate instead. Very good. Are the livings of the same value?’

‘As nearly as possible the same, my lord. And I may say that Wichgate is in every sense as desirable a place of residence as Bedminton.’

‘Then, no doubt, I shall be able to arrange the matter satisfactorily,’ quoth the prelate, turning to leave the room.

The Bishop of St. Ninian’s was, in fact, delighted with his future brother-in-law’s suggestion. The exchange of livings would blunt the edge of any attack on the Bishop of Warminster; and for himself he felt that, much as he loved his sister, it would suit him better if on her marriage she were transferred to another diocese. It sometimes seemed to him that Miss Belsize was gradually undertaking the management of the see of St. Ninian’s.

It was unfortunate that just at this juncture Mr. Noble had an attack of influenza, which confined him to the house; and when he recovered so far as to go out of doors, he proceeded at once, under the doctor’s instructions, to the seaside. But the wedding-day of the Rev. William Marks and the Bishop of Warminster’s daughter had been already fixed, and it was necessary that, if the scheme of exchanging livings was to be carried out, it should be done at once. Thus it happened that the formalities of presentation and institution had to take place before the new rector of Wichgate had an opportunity of seeing Miss Belsize. Indeed, it was only by accident that Mrs. Belsize heard that Mr. Noble had gone to Wichgate direct from Brighton, and ‘read himself in.’

‘He might have come here in the first place,’ said Miss Belsize, with some asperity in her tone; ‘but perhaps he was too weak to come so far, while there was probably some legal necessity for his entering into possession of his living at once.’

‘Perhaps so. But, I say, Elizabeth——’

‘Why *will* you persist in using that odious phrase, “I say”?’

Especially now, my dear, when, as the wife of a bishop, your example naturally attracts attention.'

Mrs. Belsize's cheek flushed; she clenched her little fist under the table. Was she a child to be talked to in this way? As a mark of her displeasure she kept silence till her sister-in-law begged her to resume her discourse.

'I was only going to suggest,' she said, 'that as we are engaged to dine and sleep at Warminster to-morrow night, we might drive over to Wichgate from Warminster in the morning, and see your new home.'

Miss Belsize readily fell in with this proposal; and on the following day the two ladies proceeded to Wichgate Rectory from Warminster in a hired fly. During the drive Miss Belsize was engaged in composing dignified yet cutting reproofs for her defaulting and ungrateful lover. The rectory, as Mrs. Belsize kindly pointed out, seemed all that was desirable; but the furniture of the drawing-room, into which the two ladies were shown, was not of a soul-satisfying nature.

'Of course this must be entirely altered,' Miss Belsize was saying to her sister-in-law as the door opened, and a little old lady, inclining to stoutness, with fat brown curls (palpably false) attached to her forehead, came in. She made a profound curtsy, and glanced inquiringly from one of her visitors to the other, while the heart of Miss Belsize sank within her as she asked herself, '*Can this be his mother?*'

'Which of you ladies, may I ask, is *Miss Belsize?*' inquired the little old lady, clasping her mittened hands in front of her.

'This is she,' said the Bishop's wife; upon which the old lady ran up to Elizabeth, caught her hands, carried them to her breast, and turned her eyes slowly to the ceiling, until her face was nearly horizontal.

'Our benefactress!' murmured she. 'With all respects to our Bishop's lady [another curtsy], but our benefactress [an arch, affectionate glance towards Miss Belsize] must 'ave the first place in our 'arts, *always*.'

'But I don't understand,' said Miss Belsize, with her usual deliberate emphasis. 'Who are you? Are you Mr. Noble's mother?'

'Oh dear no, madam [with a smile of surpassing archness]. I'm *her* mother.'

'Whose?'

'The bride's mother, you know. We only came on Thursday

—the marriage was only a week ago—so *really*, you know, this is a bit of the honeymoon. They had been engaged twelve months, and it might have been twelve years but for your goodness, madam. My son-in-law has explained everything to me. The appointment was nominally that of the Bishop, but *really*—’ Another expressive glance, more arch even than the former one.

‘Good heavens!’ thought Miss Belsize, ‘what has that man been daring to say to those two women about me?’

Her indignation gave her strength; but it was hard—oh! it was hard—to have such ample causes of anger and not be able to show a trace of it. Miss Belsize was unable to sit still long. She got up, and muttering something by way of adieu, went to the fly which still waited for the two ladies, followed by her sister-in-law, and totally unmoved by the entreaties of Mrs. Herbert (so the small stout elderly person was named) to wait and receive the grateful thanks of the bride and bridegroom.

As Miss Belsize stepped into the fly she caught sight of a figure in black—the Reverend Martin Noble’s—crowned by a very wide black felt hat. One of his arms was concealed behind the figure of a young woman, whose head reposed comfortably somewhere in the neighbourhood of the wide black felt. The two were coming on slowly towards the house, all unconscious of Mrs. Herbert, who was standing at an open window waving her arms at them to attract their attention.

‘Good heavens!’ said Miss Belsize to herself, ‘if they should see that old lunatic! If she should take it into her head to shout to them!’ She hurried into the fly, and astonished the somnolent flyman by the energy of her tone as she commanded him to drive back to Warminster.

During the drive she maintained a solemn silence; and never afterwards was she heard to allude to the Rector of Wichgate, or to any of his ways, words, or works.

But not long after the visit paid by the two ladies to Wichgate Rectory Mr. Noble received an invitation, which he well knew was a summons, from his new diocesan.

‘Look here, Mr. Noble,’ said the Bishop of Warminster, ‘will you give me plain answers to one or two plain questions? Did I not appoint you to the living of Wichgate at the suggestion of Miss Belsize?’

‘I believe so, my lord,’ said the Rector with a bow.

‘And did not she recommend you to me because it was understood that you and she were to be married?’

'What, my lord? Do I hear aright? I? Married to Miss Belsize?' and the reverend gentleman's eyes wandered about the room, as if seeking a clue to the mystery.

'Come now, sir,' said the Bishop sternly, 'I am speaking as one man of the world to another. Was it not so arranged?'

'Never, my lord. I am ready to take my oath of it.'

'Or understood?'

'Not in the least, so far as I was concerned. Why, my lord, during the conversation between the Bishop of St. Ninian's and myself there was not a word, not a syllable——'

'Perhaps not. But was there no love-making?'

'Love-making?' echoed the Rector with a smile. 'Your lordship cannot be personally acquainted with Miss Belsize.'

'She seems to have thought so, at any rate,' said the Bishop bluntly.

'It is possible, and it grieves me to the heart to think that it should be possible,' said Mr. Noble, pausing for a moment as if to concentrate his intellect in an act of the purest justice. 'I can only say, or rather hint, that some ladies, after they pass a certain age, are notoriously liable to mistake the most ordinary politeness for—I need say no more. Doubtless your lordship understands.'

'Yes; I think I *do* understand,' said the Bishop slowly, and with a glance so peculiar that for the first time in his life Mr. Noble felt abashed.

There, perforce, the matter ended. The Rector of Wichgate is a very popular man, and he is confident that the Bishop of Warminster will soon forget the unpleasant circumstance which attended his first coming into the diocese.

It may be mentioned that not long ago Mr. Noble presented several volumes (the sweepings of his library) to the Wichgate Sunday School and Parochial Book Club. Among them was a beautifully bound copy of Miss Havergal's poems, the fly-leaf of which was missing. The Rector is now a High Churchman; he has dropped the 'Luther' altogether, even the initial.

Miss Belsize still resides at the episcopal palace of St. Ninian's; but it is understood in the diocese that she is to be united in the bonds of holy matrimony to the Rev. Simeon Baldun, one of his lordship's chaplains, as soon as a suitable living falls vacant. It is likewise understood in the diocese that the marriage ceremony is to precede the rite of institution to the benefice.

SOME HIGH NOTES.

Villa Rosatch, S. Moritz, July 26th.—‘*Mossieu repond pas!*’ says the boots of the ‘Steinbock’ at Chur, looking as if he were going to cry with vexation. He stands outside my bedroom door in his stocking-feet with a paper in his hand, and knocks with rustic timidity at the doors of such of us as are in want of the early diligence for S. Moritz. But, ‘*Mossieu repond pas!*’ says he distressfully, in German-Swiss-French; so I beat my fists on my companion’s door, like a toy rabbit on a drum. It’s half-past four, and, though we in the valley are grey, sunlight is stealing among the snow patches on the mountains. The only sound in the hotel, save the soft footfall and timid knocking of the boots, is the brawl and rush of the Plessur River; so close, that it seems to be pouring along the corridors and cascading down the stairs. Outside, I can see them washing carriages round the village fountain; for this is the end of the railway, and we have fifty miles and more to drive to the Engadine.

At last, the time being four in the afternoon, the sun blazing down on us, it is clear we draw near Italy. The *wirthschaft* becomes *osteria*; the *handlung*, *negozio*; the haymakers resemble our own dear organ-grinders with scythes; the women, with coloured handkerchiefs bound round their heads, recall the ladies who stand with little birds for fortune-telling in the Brompton Road; the insurance plates on the houses instead of Basel bear Trieste. On that track like a bridle-path in the Isle of Wight, or a carrier’s road from the Norfolk coast to London, there crawls the Septimer route, once crossed by emperors of Rome and Germany with their hordes, over the mountains down to Maloya and the Val d’Inferno; and here is ours, the Julier Pass, that for the next two hours holds us clinched in its zigzags, like the child’s toy that opens out for wooden soldiers. Up, up, for two hours we crawl in the diligence like a gaudy fly in the hot sun, our only comrades in the waste the weather-beaten telegraph-poles. Something pathetic to me in the contemplation of those wires that run from South Kensington to the Kulm at S. Moritz, the last chance for the poor consumptive. How often must they not have sadly flashed, ‘George died last night, quite painlessly;’ or ‘Amy

worse, hopeless ; ' and now stout and yet peeling from the so great extremes of weather, they stretch straight up the desolate pass ; while we crawl and bend up, up, so sharply that the blue and red umbrellas of the daughters of America are just below us in their carriage, and a peasant's cart is just above. Near the top of the pass, 7,360 feet above the sea—or say a mile and a half or so above the nigger minstrels rattling on Ramsgate sands—we pause to breathe at the last house, grey and solitary ; the true top, 140 feet higher up, is marked by two round milestones placed there by Augustus when he made his military road from Chiavenna down to Chur. They are old, very old, but the snows above are older. 'What are two thousand years ?' the snows above seem to say with a ghastly white sneer ; 'you poor pieces of mica slate ! Why, we are the direct representatives of the first snow that fell after the flood !'

And now, just as we went up, up, so we go down, down, the same zigzags, at a steady trot, sharply round and round, down to the Engadine and its lakes of malachite. Above, far away, are the snows of the Bernina ; far below us through the dark green pines we see the white toy houses of Silvaplana and its little lake, that now looks almost like spilt quicksilver in the meadows. When we lumber into S. Moritz and lurch up at the post-office, my face is so stiff with sun and breeze it feels like a mask, and I can scarcely unbend it to direct the splendid hotel porter in blue and gold to our luggage.

Wednesday.—The chief charm of S. Moritz, at least to me, lies in its streets of wooden shops, of photographs, old silver, olive wood ; even Caspari's, where they crowd for afternoon tea. It reminds me of what the Pantiles must have been once at Tunbridge Wells ; indeed, the whole of S. Moritz-bad looks rather tentative, as though cautious speculators were waiting to see if its fashion were really permanent before making it more solid. Perhaps some of the look may be due to everything being shut up in the winter and lying snug under deep snow for four or five months. The village, the highest in the Engadine, where the invalids spend their winter, is three-quarters of a mile off above the lake ; and there we stroll to look for rooms, seeing that we have come here for quiet, and that living at our hotel is rather like taking up residence at the Café Royal in Regent Street. And there, in the Villa Rosatch, we find them, with a little balcony looking over the lake, and a huge trout rod hanging over the side of it, like a sign

for a tackle-shop; with great stoves in the corners in case the snow come; with carpets, rare luxury in the Engadine, and with the electric light hanging like a frozen water-lily from the ceiling. Strange, this mixture of extreme Alpine simplicity and the electric light one observes everywhere in the Engadine. At night, when black shadows lie thunderous under the broad wooden eaves, and through the deep-sunk windows you see peasant heads round a yellow lamp of paraffin, in the streets the great white globes flicker and fizz as they do at Charing Cross Station; and under the archway of the houses, a demi-lune in the centre almost like entering an ancient college, the big St. Bernard lounges so that he may sleep in the shade. In the morning—for part of the cure is to sleep with the window open—we are woke by the most musical tinkle of the cattle bells, like ice clinking against the crystal sides of the lake. It is six o'clock, and the sun is shining as though it all were Italy in a refrigerator.

Sunday, July 31st.—The Italian haymakers slouch along over the cobbles in the bright morning sun, carrying their coats and large faded cotton umbrellas; under one of the house-archways they stand chattering round piles of cheap clothing spread on tables. The other side of the street is a gaudy stall of handkerchiefs, beloved of the women; arm-in-arm they stare at them. If perchance on the stall they see one of gayer colour than they happen to have on their head they straightway buy it. Then the men lounge on the wall and point at them with their umbrellas as they go past as bright as paroquets. The sonorous church bells beat, but somehow one never sees a priest. I've seen neither priest nor beggar since I've been here.

I looked in at one of their churches; it was quite plain and whitewashed. A large pulpit of inlaid wood, with a sounding-board and an hour-glass, like the one John Knox is thundering out of in Wilkie's picture, and a text in Romanisch—*Deo sola gloria ed honor*—were the only ornaments. In the Catholic chapel a servant girl and three little children were having a lively sort of nursery talk. As we came in they bethought themselves of prayer, and down went the maid on her knees, crossing herself devoutly. The children looked at her sudden dive in astonishment, then saw us and did the same; only the youngest, in her haste to begin, toppled over and fell under the seat. Saints and angels, you never heard a child yell so lustily in your life!

The shops are most of them open; all of them down at the

baths. I went in and got shaved; the garçon was not of this savage country, he thanked heaven; he was from Paris, *rue Montmartre*, close to the Bourse, and once he got back he would never come here again, his sacred word of honour! He was never warm. Did I know how much underclothing he'd got on? He stropped the razor in the palm of his hand and would tell me; which he did, at great and particular length, of flannel. '*Voyez-vous*,' a year ago last May he ran to catch a train, got very hot, took off his coat, and sat with the windows open; result, inflammation of the lungs and a year's illness; doctors at ten francs a visit, says he, laying his finger along his nose. '*C'était assommant!*' Then in May of this year he went to visit his parents in Alsace to recover his strength and get rid of his cough; did no work there; did I expect him to *piocher la terre, par exemple*? As a last resource, for a complete cure he came up here; when the sun shines hotly he finds it bearable; when it doesn't, *je tousse, je tousse, je tousse!* '*Quel pays!*' He's going back to Paris in September, and if he finds the winter, *rue Montmartre*, too much for him he's going to try shaving in Africa. He must have warmth. Do I understand? *He must have warmth.* He says that with that extreme seriousness which every Frenchman affects when speaking of himself. In fact, I'm inclined to think that the only time a Frenchman ever thinks it worth his while to be quite serious is when he's talking about himself.

Tuesday.—Reader, have you ever been on a glacier? I like that old-fashioned magazine-article style; sometimes it is 'Reader, that is if ever I am so fortunate as to have one.' It recalls youth and hot July Sunday afternoon readings of the *Leisure Hour*. Again the bright acacia waves in our London garden; again I hear the barrow-fruitman's distant drowsy cry of 'Strawberry ripe! fine strawberry ripe!'

It was a bitter March day, this second of August, as we drove into Pontresina. Pontresina was out in the streets, looking chilly, and wondering where on earth we were going on so bad a day, with alpenstocks and all those wraps; Pontresina was of opinion, skilled opinion, that the day was going to be even worse, and that the Rosegg glacier would be impossible. But we pressed on, past the stony tennis-court and the young ladies trying to keep warm, down the five miles of harsh and broken valley road, along the noisy river that looks as though composed of melting lemon-water ices. Ragged pine trees are all round us, and through the shifting

mist we catch glimpses of the stern peaks and the everlasting snows. Three-quarters of a mile from the foot of the glacier there's a little inn, where we stop for lunch; the room, with its stove, is like the first chamber of the Turkish bath—so hot that we prefer to eat our rolls and eggs in a small square tent outside, peaked with pert flags. We throw the remains of our pancakes to the hens, finish the coffee, and prepare to start. A guide comes out of the kitchen to look at us, with an ice axe and a marmot's skin on his back for knapsack; but we trudge off alone, and the sky lifts and shows a patch of blue.

There is the glacier below us, dingy with its valley life. 'See what you make of me,' it seems to say, 'if you try to civilise me; look above and see what I am, monstrous leprous snake, as I crawl up to my mountain home, so dazzling white that I seem like cloud.' And so, indeed, it is; the higher we climb the cliff, the more of it we see, the purer the glacier grows. Down at its edge, its curling, scornful lip at the head of the valley, it looks almost like the Serpentine in thaw, scratched and scarred by giant skaters, rubbled with loose stones like bad cement. We climb steadily till we reach the hut, where a rough table and seat tell us we can get milk and brandy if we please; the old man who lives there sits with his arms on the table, smoking and watching us; a boy in a tattered cloak, like a Calabrian peasant, stands looking after the cows whose bells we hear. Still we climb till we reach the cairn, where a few egg-shells and a chicken-bone or two tell of previous privations. And below is the glacier, grown pure and white, stealing out of the mist as though it were the arrested overflow from some vast fountain play in some distant cloudy Versailles. But we must not rest; we must cross the torrent if it be not too swollen; we must reach the *Mortel-hutte*. Behold the *Mortel-hutte*! Push the heavy door and enter. Somehow the sloping planks that face us remind me of the Morgue, only that they are covered with straw. In the beams above are stuffed blankets and rugs for travellers; in the corner is a gipsy fireplace, saucepans, a saw for wood, a kettle, and an axe; the other side are empty champagne and claret bottles, and the printed regulations to be observed by all who enter and remain the night. The hut is provided by the Swiss Alpine Club for climbers who wish to cross the glacier and make the ascents on the other side; a rough but kindly hospitality which asks only you should clean the saucepans before you leave. It looks rather like a genteel cow-

house, and is scribbled all over with genteel names and dates. Below is ever the glacier ; the edge drips, drips, and, peering under the frowning eaves, we have some notion of its majestic depth. Below glimmers a faint unearthly blue, like the sky on a brilliant frosty February morning.

Some one says the glacier is dangerous ; friends, let us try. I struggle up the sloping wall of ice ; my alpenstock breaks the brittle surface ; I am on the top of the side ridge ; a cold and mortal vapour exhales from the stealthy mass ; I hear the gurgle and ripple of some under-current, the ice water that runs through the creature's hollow veins. Again (ever these cockney impressions) I feel I am on a lonely, broken Serpentine ; London is deserted, ruined, sunk in another glacial period. Where is the New Zealander to ask me if I won't have a pair of skates on ?— Ah ! a distant cry ! a man striding down the valley-side waves his stick and shouts to me. He wants to know if we won't have a guide, I suppose. Enough for one day ; we climb the hill again, and at a dog-trot reach the restaurant in just half the time it took us to ascend.

And there across the valley we see chamois, veritable Alpine chamois. I watch them through the glass, five of them, feeding under a rock ; then, leaving each other, racing in little circles, leaping ; and then, rigidly still, attentive. Down a narrow gully come six more. They stand in attitudes, as one sees them drawn in books. Gentlemen of the French Guard, fire first ! And the first five begin again their circling and leaping ; tempting the others, as it were, to charge. Without the glass, the hillside is lifeless and blank ; absolutely nothing to be seen by the most far-sighted.

Sunday.—As we lay under a rock, eating hard-boiled eggs, we heard the roar and rattle of an avalanche. It sounded, as one says when one hears an unexpected crash in a house, like something upstairs. It was more to me as though some huge box had slid down into nature's hold, as one sees the luggage rattled down into the hold at Dover. We could see nothing ; the day was absolutely pure and motionless ; all the innumerable peaks round and below us,

Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge,

and some as rigid and dazzling in their snow as tents ; none of their glaciers that we could see had slipped ; and yet, somewhere, the Spirit of the Alps had given an impish push to some few

myriad tons of ice and rock, and some long-suffering mountain was breathing the easier for the relief. Far, far below us the ever musical tinkle of the cattle bells and the occasional sharp cry of the marmots.

We clambered down the side and across the snow, down into Suvretta valley; thence to Campfer to tea, our faces blazing. Most comforting, most home-like, the sound of the church bell. The English service was held in the village church, and as we clamped over the cobbles we could see the ringer in his blouse pulling away at the bell and puffing his china pipe. The church was cool and whitewashed, with a glaring piece of native stained glass at the end, like a cheap kaleidoscope. They left the door open during service, and we saw the cattle going past to be milked; one stared and snuffed at us heavily; I could smell her warm and drowsy milk. Two little peasant girls stood in the doorway to watch how the foreigners prayed in their own church. You would have thought yourself in some unrestored English village edifice, only that we prayed for the President of the United States, for the Federal Council of this land; only that the ladies' jackets and dresses looked a little crushed, as though they had long lain packed; only that when they knelt you saw what huge nails they had in their boots.

I strolled back to S. Moritz after service and bought the *Telegraph* at the library. 'Out on the heell wass I all day?' asked the librarian, wistfully. 'Beastly it wass, dees business; all week, haf-past six, haf-past eight; weesh it wass over.'

Villa Rosatch, S. Moritz-Dorf, August 13th. . . . 'Here's some edelweiss for you. Yes, I know it's to be bought in quantities, but I really found this, and in a very imminent deadly place, too. Not like the Fex valley, where they plant little red flags alongside of it so that the tourist may find it the easier.

'We've taken to playing cricket with broom-sticks (you know the Eton broom-sticks) on the drying-ground behind the Kurhaus. It is so home-like to hear youth declare itself *beastly sorry* when it drops a very obvious catch. This afternoon they were so misguided as to give me a full-pitch to leg. I hit it very hard, oh, very hard! and it caught a young Russian lady sauntering across the ground whack in the ribs. I ran up white with alarm to find her barking like a dog, which I take to be the Muscovite method of showing pain and fear. She speaks English perfectly, and I did my best to apologise, but I fear she'll refuse to dance with me

at the Victoria to-night. Never mind, I got fifty-three, and they couldn't get me out.

'In the rooms upstairs we've a couple of musicians staying. *Quels drôles de gens, les artistes!* They stop in all day playing; one braying at a massive symphony he's composing on the piano, a mixture of Wagner and Berlioz; the other sits on the edge of his bed twiddling scales on the fiddle. He's not well, I believe, as when he does go out of his room he's got his head wrapped up; I always know how he is in the morning by the intensity of pain he wrings from his instrument. They take their exercise mostly at night, bareheaded and smoking cigarettes. I saw one of them in knickerbockers, leaning against the post of the electric light, gazing up at the luminary. I suppose he was seeking inspiration, as old-fashioned people used to from the moon. *Quels drôles de gens!*

'We drove over to Maloya the other day, behind horses so white with dust that they looked like the pale animals of the Apocalypse. There the Engadine struggles in good earnest with Italy, and I fancy that Italy gets rather the best of it, so hot and siesta-like it grew after lunch. We strolled down to the gorge and sat in the delicious misty draught of the torrent; below twisted the white road like that detestable fumigated *ruban* they sicken us with in the Strand, down to Chiavenna. I looked at the peasants with singular interest as descendants of Balbus and Cicero; but I am bound to say I have never yet seen an Italian, gentle or simple, who gave me the impression of being able to build a wall, much less impeach a pro-consul. The gigantic hotel I found had many Londoners and the usual *boss*. Every hotel in the Engadine of any eminence has its boss. You pick him out at once by the way he comes in to *table d'hôte*, with a slight look of surprise that they should have dared to begin without him. He has been to the Engadine for at least the last fifteen years, and this year he is very much astonished that he can't have "my usual rooms." "I always come here," he says, "you see they know me;" as though that were any sort of recommendation. But it is a good thing to know the boss yourself, for if you have any difficulty he takes you in mysteriously to see the manager, and says, "This gentleman is a friend of mine," which very properly settles it. And every year he says, "I sha'n't come here again," and every year he comes; sometimes, even, in the winter. Bosses would be perfect if only they had some-sense of humour. But no king ever has a sense of

humour, or he wouldn't be there stuck up on a throne. True, Charles II. had some ; but then what a bad king he was !

'Farewell ! Next year you must come to the Engadine ; and may you have such weather as ours. They say there hasn't been so fine a summer known since '59. We are going to Pontresina as soon as we can get in there ; at present our hard-worked friends at the bar are monopolising most of the best rooms.'

Tuesday.—When the youthful Engadiner grows tired of driving an *einspanner* in the summer, of doing a little carpentering in the winter, he makes up his mind to see the world and make his fortune. But, if he possibly can, he always comes back to his long lean valley to die. If he has made a fortune, in nine cases out of ten as a confectioner, he builds him a chalet of glistening pine, with a pious motto carved under the eaves, in Latin or Romanisch ; the garden is brilliant with flowers stacked in pots (seeing they won't grow in the ground), and decked with large silver balls on tripods that make your eyes ache in the sun. All the windows on the ground floor have flower-pots in them, too ; and, up above, the trimmest white blinds ; while the electric light hangs in the broad balcony, and a great globe of it on a tall pole in front of the hall-door. At the gate he plants a board with a notice in German, Italian, and French that entrance is prohibited, which seems to have the contrary effect as well, for I never yet saw anyone coming out. My impression is, the owner leaves his chalet early in the morning and spends his day visiting the hotel proprietors ; at any rate, if by chance you penetrate into the sacred inner office of your hotel you are sure to find a prosperous middle-aged gentleman making decently merry with the proprietor, the manager, and sometimes the head-waiter. There's an open box of cigarettes and a slim bottle of Rhine wine, and you may be sure they are discussing the chances of the vintage in Italy, and making arrangements to go down and see after their purchases of it in November. But if the Engadiner makes no fortune as confectioner, then all his days he remains a waiter. Oh, my brothers who dine in restaurants (Gatti's, Monico's, the Café Royal, according to our means), let us always duly remember the waiter ; that tall, supple, dark man who seems Italian, but is in reality an Engadiner. Let us remember that anything we give him brings him nearer home, is added to the pile in the greasy leather purse on which he sleeps ; one day to carry him, *viâ* Flushing, home to S. Moritz or Samaden, to the squat white house with the heavy roof and the deep-set

windows, down whose dark stairs he paddled bare-footed as a child, up which he hopes one day—you understand? then *pauca verba*. Now I have told you, you have no excuse for ever giving him less than threepence.

Saturday, August 27th. Pontresina.—So we don't unpack, but take an evening walk instead along the river, past the Sansouci, towards the Morteratsch glacier; and there, almost under the monster's sullen lip, we find a very honest fellow milking a cow and talking to a friend. 'No, *mein Herr*,' he says, looking up with a broad sunburnt smile (charming contrast to the dark scowl of the glacier), he has no cup, but if we please he will give us a drink out of the pail—of shallow pinewood, clean, wholesome, sweet wood-milk smelling. The milk is frothing with deep and creamy bubbles; there is a gentle, seething, hissing murmur in it. Indescribable, the beneficent warm sense as it creeps downwards, wrapping the inner man round like a blanket. Over the high mountain ridge swings the slender hammock of the new moon, as though the evening star were resting there, after the mighty heat of her sky-climb.

As we stand on the bridge, the cold grey glacier water tumbling along below, a man comes out of the inn and blows a small curved bugle. Some plaintive Swiss air of sorrow at leaving the mountains, it seems to me. The girls who are clearing away the tea and coffee of the afternoon from the little zinc tables, come down towards the bridge to listen; a guide or two from the inn puff their pipes approvingly; while a loose-boned German, scarlet from the sun, pulls himself past with his alpenstock. You can only hear a note of the bugle every now and then, for the noise of the water. It is ten minutes to seven, and in a moment the peaks above the glacier, just now a warm and sunny white, fade ghastly pale. They look as though they had suddenly seen a ghost; perhaps some one or two are walking there, now the sun has gone, killed years ago. As we stroll back towards Pontresina the church bell tolls heavily, heavily; behind us the peaks grow yet more terrifically white. Now it seems to me a funeral of some lost guide, and all those high snows the winding-sheet.

Sunday.—I was looking at the English graves, so pathetic always abroad—of the poor lady lost last September by the fall of the diligence in the Albula pass; of the young man, son of Sir C. R., 'killed by a fall near this place;' at the graves of the dead, at thirty-two, twenty-nine, and thirty-three years of age, that

mean, I fear, consumption—when I saw a woman in dark clothes, not mourning (she was too poor for that), but the ordinary working clothes that all the peasants wear, sitting on the wall of the smaller graveyard below, where the little graves all seemed to mark the resting-places of children. At her feet was a miniature inclosure fenced round with tiny, almost doll's-house white wooden palings; there was a little cross, too, perhaps six inches high, and hung on it a circlet of white beads. On the grass two children were sitting, arranging a few wild flowers; another, with a battered tin bowl, went down to the hillside torrent and filled it; and all the while the mother never moved; her hand was over her eyes, her head bent over the little grave; so complete, so touching an attitude of lost dejection I have never seen. We could not understand each other's language, but every line of her bent figure told me far more eloquently than words of her sorrow and her loss. I turned again as I went into the wood and saw her just wipe her eyes with the back of her hand and then sink again into the same unutterable grief. And all the time the children played with the flowers, the little maid went piously watering out of her tin bowl. The children here are so pretty. Who can doubt that the poor mother's heart was buried there deep, deep with her brown-faced, quick-eyed darling whose tiny sunburnt hands were folded restfully under the diminutive cross. You heard the click of the alpenstocks against the stones, as people came down, close by the church, from their long day's climb up Piz Languard.

Tuesday.—People are beginning to go home, to Portman Square and Lower Seymour Street, and such-like irreproachable neighbourhoods. You see groups and piles of luggage at half-past seven in the morning, waiting in the road opposite the post-office for the diligence from Poschiavo through the Bernina Pass to pick them up. Their *table d'hôte* friends and acquaintances come and see them off, and there are many regretful partings between the young men and maidens who have been dancing and climbing and walking together the month past. They hope to meet again, but it's ten to one they never do; for if the world is, as people say, very small, it is also very large. At these farewells stout middle-aged Englishmen develop an extraordinary politeness; they turn up with valedictory bouquets, and stand bareheaded till the diligence is out of sight. Then they come lumbering back to the hotel with their hands in their pockets, and reply to their wives' expostulations, 'Well, my dear, I don't suppose we shall ever see

them again ; you didn't ask them to call, I imagine.' The English are a fearless race ; to that they owe the possession of India and the Suez Canal shares ; but who ever heard of one of them asking a *table d'hôte* acquaintance to come and call ?

Sunday, September 11th.—Snow falling heavily, quietly, out of a sky densely charged with it. In the chilly English church I sit and watch it falling past Mrs. Bancroft's stained-glass window ; the parson's saw is drowned in sneezings, as at home in January. What with the church and dining in the restaurant without a stove, I wake in the morning with a terrible sore throat that would have delighted me at school but distresses me at Pontresina. So I summon my small friend the waiter, and beg him to procure me an English doctor. No English doctor left, he says (as though he had been all eaten at *table d'hôte*), but he can get me a German one who talks English very fine. There enters then (after an interval, in which I imagine him to be reading up the subject) a young gentleman in a sort of German covert coat, who bows low and regards me fixedly. At last he says, 'You 'ave pain the front 'ed. No? You 'ave feevre. No?' Then he unscrews a small thermometer, tucks it under my arm, says, 'old 'im goot, so ;' walks to the window, blows his nose lustily, and remains looking out of it. The wood roars up the stove, the snow falls as in a pathetic Adelphi drama, and I feel convinced I am going to die, to have a five-franc piece laid on each eye, with only waiters for mourners. True enough, the thermometer shows I have *feevre*, and the young gentleman looks at it and smiles. He does that, I say to myself, to reassure me, because the case is really grave. I am about to burst into tears and demand writing materials, when he says, 'Show troot, pleass!' He opens his own mouth extremely wide, and, brandishing a toothbrush, gazes down into me with a startled expression. His mind is made up ; now he knows what is wrong with me ; I have a sore throat and must 'gurgle.' The treatment to be pursued is as follows : I must 'a box of water take,' and I must 'goot gurgle.' Nothing will save me but that ; 'goot gurgle every two, tree hour.' For food 'soup wiz *eier* in im,' and I muss not get out of bett. For the rest, 'Yes, you have feevre,' and he will send me the gurgle ; with which he buttons up the covert coat and bows himself away. He will do all that human skill can for me, I know, and the little waiter, too ; for whenever I ring the bell for soup, or more wood, he comes in triumphantly with another supply of 'gurgle.' It is

a white substance; for myself, I should say it was table salt; and it is invariably inclosed in a small box which I observe bears the name of the leading Pontresina jeweller.

For three days, while the snow falls, I gurgled to the best of my poor abilities and drink soup. On the fourth it is evident that more drastic remedies are to be taken, since the young gentleman appears with a large wooden box under his arm, which he unfastens with his usual smile (delight in a new toy, I remark to myself), and which I am very much alarmed to see contains shining steel instruments. He fastens a large glittering disk on his eye, with a small hole in it; he looks something like a diver and something like Cyclops; he takes a 'box of water' and a long penetrating-looking instrument with a brush on the end, beckons me to the window, and before I know what he is doing he is rattling the instrument up and down my throat, exactly like a chimney-sweep cleaning a chimney. What I suffered! I try to explain to the friends who come and sit with me what I have been suffering, but I can see from the look in their eye that they are not in the least interested. One even wishes he was me to be laid up in such beastly weather. My very travelling companion declares he has had all that and worse done to him when he's been ill, and then breaks off into a long, uninteresting account of his chase that morning after chamois. I scarcely listen to him—I am suffering too much; for, upon my word, I know no greater tragedy than not being allowed to talk about yourself. But I am bound to say that the young gentleman cures me, and that very cheaply. 'Honour the charge he made!' if I may slightly paraphrase the BalACLava lyric to his advantage.

MY FIRST ELEPHANT.

WHAT a to-do there was! What a packing and unpacking of everything! What confusion, what bustle! 'Boy' was echoing and re-echoing all over the place; not that that was anything out of the ordinary, however.

As I sit here now, in my long arm-chair, with my cheroot in my mouth and my B. and S. adjacent, I cannot help laughing as the whole thing comes as vividly to mind again as though it happened yesterday. I wonder the poor old 'Boy' didn't go mad; I believe he did go mad. He lost his head, that was certain. He packed those things which he ought not to have packed; he left unpacked those things which he ought to have packed. I discharged him, I fined him, I boxed his ears, I swore: anyone would have sworn. And then, when I had poured out the vials of my wrath and used such language as Rabelais used, still I was not happy.

I had not to catch a train; there was no cab waiting at the door; time was no object to me whatever; I had no irritating companion to constantly say, 'Come on, hurry up!' or anything of that sort. No, there was no apparent reason to the uninitiated for all this loss of temper, all this hurrying to and fro, all this babel and confusion worse confounded; and I imagine, looking back, that the poor old 'Boy' was not the only one that lost his head.

Well, well! I was but a youngster, and it was excusable. It was an epoch in my life, my first low-country trip. I had, of course, read the stirring tales of Mayne Reid and other authors who fire the youthful mind; I had gone much further, for I had listened to hundreds of tales told by the men themselves, the very heroes of big-game shooting. How I used to drink in every word! How I used to sit with my mouth wide open, my ears cocked, I verily believe, until my Peria Dore would say, 'Come, come, youngster, let us turn in.' So I turned in, to dream of the 'rogue,' of that *rara avis*, the 'tusker,' of the 'charge,' and of the wonderful tracking. But now, dreaming, listening, wondering were at an end; for I myself was going down to do combat with the giant of the forest. My mind was made up, my leave granted, and everything arranged—ammunition, tents, commissariat, and battery all packed.

It was for this, not merely to catch the 1.30 from Euston, or anything so humdrum as that, that all the hubbub was about.

The excitement of one's first elephant hunt begins with the packing. It never ends. Why I could almost kick the Boy now! When we finally got the things packed, everything was taken out of the bungalow, from saucepans upwards. The coolies moved off with their loads, each man carrying about 40 lbs. on his head; all marching off in single file, all chattering, and pouring out awful language. Everybody gets utterly demoralised over packing, even the 'mild Hindoo.'

The 'Boy' and the coolies were to get to Wellaway that night, and have dinner ready when I arrived. At Wellaway there was a Government rest-house, but, as the road was an unfrequented one, the rest-house was allowed to get in a very bad state of dilapidation, and was horribly dirty; and the man in charge is very aptly described in the same words. They were both very old, very dilapidated, and disgustingly dirty. Either from this reason or because it was so feverish there, few men stayed a night, preferring to push on to Tiloola, the next stage.

I had, however, arranged to meet my companion, a well-known Shikari, at Wellaway, and we were to stay there the first night.

Here it will be as well to say, perhaps, that this was all taking place in Ceylon. I was a coffee-planter, and at the time of which I write residing in the district of Haputalle, at an elevation of about 5,000 feet above sea level. From my bungalow verandah I looked right down on to the low country, a most wonderful panorama, a perfectly flat country stretching mile on mile, as far as the eye could see, right down to the sea, which could be seen in the far-off distance glittering on the horizon. Here and there, in this vast extent of country, might be noticed small green spots, shining little oases, in this vast track of jungle. These bright little spots were villages; the bright green, growing paddy (rice); and very few and far between they are. It is an almost uninhabited country, a country of which no one, except men who went down there shooting big game, knew anything whatever.

This was the home of the elephant; but, like all really intelligent animals, he was not always 'in' when called upon. We had, however, been careful about this, and had had word brought us that there was a herd of seven elephants not very far from Tamanaville.

I must mention what is generally not known, namely, that a 'tusker' is very rare in Ceylon. Though common enough in

India proper—which, metaphorically speaking, is a ‘stone’s throw’ from Ceylon, and to which, of course, it at one time was joined—yet from some cause, something lacking in the food probably, the Ceylon elephants seldom grow tusks. Imagine the keen jealousy of anyone who gets news of a tusker. He hurriedly and mysteriously disappears in quest of it, keeping his greatest chum in ignorance as to where he is off to, or what he is going after. There is no one so jealously selfish as your ‘sportsman’ when it comes to a matter of this sort.

During a residence of some eighteen years in Ceylon, it has only been my good fortune to see three tuskers; it will, therefore, be easily understood how very anxious every sportsman is to shoot one. Where there is no tusk, what do you take as the trophy? I hear some one ask. Why, we take the tail; and, though not so handsome as a fox’s brush, I can assure you it is thought much more of. It certainly is not what one would call a beautiful trophy; and to kill so huge, intelligent, and useful an animal simply for his miserable little tail does seem a shame. Yet, do you know, I believe an Englishman would be just as keen to shoot an elephant if it had no tail at all.

Now, after this digression, let us start again for Wellaway. It is now 3 P.M. and quite time I was off; so, shouting to Veemin, my horsekeeper, to bring round my horse, I am soon in the saddle. Veemin, running alongside, dashes up short cuts and gets ahead, and keeps ahead as only a Tamil horsekeeper can. For the horsekeeper always accompanies you in this way, invariably arriving at the journey’s end first; meeting you on arrival and taking away the horse, cleaning and feeding it, before he gets anything himself. In this way a horsekeeper goes on an average thirty miles a day. Not a bad performance for a man, day after day, carrying a horse-rug and brushes with him too.

In due time I arrive at Wellaway, to find my friend already there, dinner ready, and everyone in good spirits. ‘L.’ and I have some shandy-gaff, and, settling ourselves into long arm-chairs (a decided luxury in this country), discuss matters.

The heat is intolerable, mosquitoes swarm, but this by no means abates my keenness, for ‘L.’ begins by telling me that his tracker’s son reports the herd moving in the direction of Tiloola, which means only about twenty miles off, and that there are five very fine elephants in the herd, and two ‘poonches’ (young ones). All this is very exciting, and the twenty miles is a mere nothing to

me, merely the next street; and though mosquitoes may worry, and perspiration may pour, what of that? Having dined comfortably (for if proper arrangements are made, you can dine just as well in the heart of the densest jungle in the low country as on the top of a mountain in your own bungalow), we turned into our camp beds, which had been carefully put up in the verandah, and, carrying on a desultory conversation, finally dropped off to sleep. The coolies were all lying about in the back verandah, fast asleep—and how fast a coolie *does* sleep can only be realised by the person who has to awake him.

'Yendra! Yendra!' were the words which aroused me in the morning ('Get up! Get up!'). It was the Boy rousing the coolies, and sending them off to Tiloola. 'Twas 4 A.M. and a lovely starlit morning.

'Get tea ready by five o'clock, Boy,' mutters 'L.' as he turns over and goes to sleep again.

I toss about for a short time, and then get up; see the horsekeepers feed the horses, hurry the coolies off, and make myself generally obnoxious, until 'L.' can stand it no longer and has to get up too.

'Come along, tea is ready;' and, falling to, we are soon hard at work on ham and eggs and like delicacies, after which we feel fit for anything.

Mounting our horses, we ride along in the direction of Tiloola.

Trotting on, we overtake the coolies, and, telling our gun-bearers to run along with us, we go on for a mile or so. Then dismounting, the horses are handed over to the horsekeepers, who are told to wait until the coolies overtake them, when they are all to come along together.

Thus getting quietly away, with our gun-bearers, we are ready for anything which may cross the road.

We have not gone far before I get a shot at a jungle fowl. Then 'L.' gets two large pigeons (*maha batagoya*), a right and left. Then we tramp along for some time before anything is seen. Sh! Sh! a herd of deer pop across, five. Too far off to get a shot, however.

The heat has now become terrible, so we determine to sit down and wait for the horses to overtake us; sitting here we get three more pigeons, as they fly over the road. By the time coolies and horses arrive the heat is indescribable, and very glad we are to mount and ride slowly on.

Arriving at Tiloola, and telling the Boy to get everything unpacked, we go down to the river, close by, to bathe. Very pretty, very cool, and very jolly it is here. No wonder the old classical poets wrote of the 'grateful shade.' There is very little water in the river just now, as it is the dry season; but look at the high-water marks up on the trees there, thirty feet high, and you will get some idea of what it is in the wet season. 'Tis a mighty torrent then, when all the water from the mountains above comes pouring down. Now 'tis a mere rivulet, about three feet deep only, except in the pools, which are of all depths.

The leafy boughs, meeting overhead, make a perfect shade from the sun, and are alive with small parrots and green barbets. We stay down here, in this delightfully cool spot, for fully an hour, and then go up to breakfast, for it is now one o'clock. Breakfast over, we send for old 'Bohomo hondi,' 'L.'s' pet tracker, and, lying down on our camp-beds, enjoy a siesta, a thing generally done throughout the tropics during the middle of the day.

'Mahatmayia! Mahatmayia!' and I start up to see a weazened, shrunken old creature salaaming me. This old wanderer, this skin and bone, is the wonderful old man whose tracking 'L.' is never tired of lauding to the skies. *This* is the old man I have heard so much of, is it?

Why, he must be an antediluvian! I put him down as a useless old fossil at once, and feel that, if left in that old man's hands, the whole trip is doomed to failure.

What a gross injustice I was doing this most extraordinary old chap remains to be seen.

The old man 'Bohomo hondi' says he is not quite sure where the herd is—that there is any herd at all, in fact. He hasn't seen it himself. His boys have given him the information, which, from time to time, he has forwarded to 'L.'

'And boys are boys, and I never rely on mine,' mumbles the old wretch.

Well, here is a pretty mess! I thought we had a herd waiting to be shot, and the whole thing is an invention of this 'Yakoos.' I am in an awful rage. 'L.' is what may be called mad, and the old chap gets some choice language let loose on him. He simply sits down on the edge of the verandah, and chews his betel with the greatest unconcern. Perhaps he didn't understand our Cinghalese?

We drank brandy and soda thirstily, and thoughtfully. My

time is up the day after to-morrow, so what has to be done must be done to-morrow, which leaves me a day to get back in.

'Isn't there a "solitary" about anywhere, Bohomo hondi?' asks 'L.' 'Ho! enawa, ratteri eci awa' ('Yes, yes, there was, one came last night'). So there was a solitary, or rogue elephant, close to the old man's village it seemed, and it had been out last night damaging their crops; but the old fossil hadn't thought of mentioning this, thinking we were bent on going after a herd, when we should probably have shot several elephants.

Now a 'solitary' is always a vicious old elephant, having been driven out of the herd by his fellows, who can stand his arrogance no longer, and no other herd will let him join them. He is an outcast and very wary, and therefore much more difficult to shoot. In the majority of cases very dangerous, as he haunts the neighbourhood of villages, breaking down plantains, cocoanuts, and doing no end of damage generally, and soon finds out what a terror he is, and begins to chase the people, seeing how afraid they are of him. A sportsman naturally prefers shooting him to any other (except a tusker), but 'L.' had not considered it safe for me to begin my first low-country trip with a 'solitary,' a herd being so much easier to manage, and so much more timid than an old rogue. This rogue was a well-known bad character, and 'L.' had several times been after him before, but without success. The arrangement was that Bohomo hondi should come first thing in the morning, at four o'clock, and, taking up the rogue's track, we would follow it up; and having thus settled matters, we sent the old chap off to his village close by.

Now began an animated discussion between 'L.' and me as to 'first shot.'

'Why, I understood I was to get first shot,' I said. 'Yes, but not at this rogue, which is an old elephant of mine. At the herd you were, but this is quite different.'

'No, it isn't; I don't see how it is your elephant because you let him go once. Besides, you promised me first shot.'

'I withdraw that promise.' And so on. Finally we agreed to toss up, much to 'L.'s annoyance, I think. There is no one so jealous over these matters as your 'old shot.'

The rule is, to toss for first shot; but when an old hand takes a tyro up to his first elephant, of course the tyro gets the shot. Yet here was 'L.' just as jealous over this solitary as if he himself were a tyro. He had shot seventy elephants. He

did not at all like my insisting on tossing, as it gave him a chance of losing, which he didn't; he actually won.

I thought the least he could do would be to give his chance to me; but no, he stuck to it with that persistence peculiar to sportsmen. The fact was that this was a remarkably fine elephant, said to be fully nine feet high—a very big elephant for Ceylon; and 'L.' actually considered it as *his* elephant, having been after him once or twice before.

Having settled everything, we got our rifles out. Mine were a 577 xpress by Holland and Holland and a 500 xpress by Reilly, and, seeing everything in order, we strolled over to the tank.

The whole place was alive with wild fowl. A glorious sight, thousands upon thousands, from tiny little grebes to huge flamingoes; and the tank was covered with lotus in full flower. I do not think I have ever seen anything prettier than the Tiloola tank was that evening, the sun shining over the tree tops, which cast their shadows over the water. The trees were alive with birds—pigeons, barbets, parrots, and other birds too numerous to name. Yet not a shot could we fire, for fear of disturbing the rogue which we hoped was somewhere close by—at any rate the chances were that he was in hearing distance of a gun shot.

No, not a shot could we fire, and the tank swarming with teal, too. Wasn't it too bad?

Swash! what's that? Why, look! there goes a crock. Look how the birds all rise with one accord. The air is alive with them; as this awful-looking creature slowly glides along under the bank. What a fine crock he is, too! Quite sixteen feet, I should say. Yet we couldn't fire a shot.

The brute crept half out of the water and lay basking in the setting sun, and we couldn't fire at him. Wasn't it aggravating? 'Well, I shouldn't much like to retrieve a shot teal out of the tank,' said 'L.,' 'or send a coolie in to do so, with that fellow about.' 'Why, the tank is alive with them! Look there! There are two more! And look over yonder! What is that moving along so slowly, like a floating log?' But we know there is no current to move anything. What an enormous beast that is! It was aggravating not to be able to rid the world of some of these huge saurians, indescribably loathsome, useless, and certainly not ornamental. Evening is closing in, however, and here there is no twilight. At six o'clock, when the sun goes down, it becomes totally dark. So we give a loud coo-ee, and with a mighty splash

the crocks disappear, as though by magic, and the air once more becomes alive with birds, and the whole place resounds with their clamorous cries.

Wending our way back, we find dinner is almost ready. So we change into our pyjamahs for comfort and ease without dignity. *Otium sine dignitate* is the Ceylon sportsman's motto, and, unlike many, he actually practises what he preaches. Pyjamahs, however, were no protection from mosquitoes, which were simply awful, their size and numbers only outdone by their bloodthirstiness; for such small things their powers of imbibing are wonderful, and I wonder some *savant* has not 'explained' it. This is just the sort of thing they explain so well. They have told us that only the male bites, that mosquitoes are essentially vegetarians, and a few startling truths of that sort; but I should like to know how many quarts of blue blood a real vegetarian mosquito can manage to imbibe in twelve hours, and the result on the mosquito. These little pests being quite too awful, we had dinner in our camp beds, the Boy handing in a plate at a time, carefully raising the curtains as little as possible, and, before doing so, flogging the air with a towel.

In this manner we managed to get through dinner with at least merriment, the whirr and hum outside the curtain considerably adding to it—a noise like a dozen flights of bees on the wing. Very pleasant indeed *outside*. How thoroughly we enjoyed our smoke; and, talking away of other hunts in which he had participated, 'L.' whiled away the time until we dropped off to sleep.

'Nagahata, nagahata, Mahatmya' ('Get up, get up, master') were the first words I heard; and, rousing myself, I made out old Bohomo hondi's form.

'Twas quite dark and it was abominably early. The Boy was not even up. 'Boy! Boy!' Whizz! went a boot; whizz! went another. 'Sar!' yelled the Boy. 'Why,' I said, 'we wanted early tea, at four o'clock, and here it is broad daylight' ('twas as dark as pitch), 'no fire lighted, no water boiling, no toast ready: what does it all mean? 'Me speak Mootsamy, he no wake,' says the Boy, dashing out to lay hands on Mootsamy, the kitchen coolie; and presently we hear an uproar in the kitchen, in which the Boy's voice and Mootsamy's are blended, but not in unison.

Bohomo hondi says the 'rogue' was there last night, and Rang hami had fired a shot at him to frighten him away from his paddy: hadn't we heard the shot? Yes; now we came to think of

it, we thought we had—at about nine o'clock, but we were not positive, the mosquitoes had been humming so, we said. It appeared, on inquiry, that Rang hami's charge consisted of an old nail, and, of course, fired at a distance of a hundred yards or so. Most 'rogue' elephants carry a lot of old iron about with them obtained in that way—nails, stones, lumps of lead, &c. These things are fired into them by the villagers, watching their paddy by night. It is the most effectual way they have of frightening the solitaries away.

In one night an elephant will wreck the work of years, leaving nothing behind him but a mass of uprooted plantains, or broken-down cocoanut trees, a trampled paddy field, and a few fallen houses. A whole village probably consists of not more than half a dozen houses—the population, twenty to thirty people, all one family, dying out not gradually, but with most appalling rapidity. Starvation, fever, dysentery, dry seasons and consequent famine, resulting in utter want of energy, are most surely exterminating these people.

'Tea ready, sar!' at last says the Boy.

'Eat as much as you can,' says 'L.,' 'for there is no knowing when we shall get back.'

With such an uncertainty ahead we both tuck in heartily, and having thoroughly fortified the inner man for a long siege, get our rifles, and hand them over to our gunbearers. 'L.' takes one coolie with him, giving one rifle to Bohomo hondi. I take two, both, like myself, new to the sport—Vellian and Parpen—giving them a rifle each, with ammunition, and telling them not to speak a word on pain of instant death, or make the slightest sound. All coughing, sneezing, or blasphemy they want to indulge in, they must do *now*, and not later on. With a few warnings of this kind, which evidently begin to make them wish they hadn't come, off we start; time about five o'clock. Crossing the road, we go along the edge of the tank, which is very quiet compared to what it was last night, the numerous birds just awaking. At the far end of the tank Bohomo hondi stops, and points out the elephant's tracks. Yes, he had been down to the tank last night. There were his tracks all about in the soft mud. 'This is some hours old,' says Bohomo hondi. Getting into single file we push on, Bohomo hondi leading, then 'L.,' then myself, the three coolies, with very protruding eyes, bringing up the rear. They do not understand a word of Cinghalese, and, not knowing

what the old tracker had said, are fully under the impression that the elephant is close at hand. I see that it only requires a sudden movement of monkeys amongst the trees and the coolies will bolt. I therefore consider it wise to secure a rifle whilst I can. So taking my 577, and telling Vellian in a sepulchral whisper to keep close to me, and that if he runs away I will most certainly shoot him, I load both rifles, and hurry on and overtake 'L.' and Bohomo hondi. The tracks are fairly distinct, and I do not think much of the tracking difficult, so far. The jungle, too, is fairly open and walking comparatively easy. We must have been going on like this for more than an hour, the 'going' getting more and more difficult, until at the end of the second hour we were all creeping along with our bodies bent double, the jungle a mass of 'wait a bit' thorns, which stopped one at every step. The heat was awful; I could see nothing but 'L.'s' back. I should never be able to stand another hour of this. I felt that if I could only stand upright for ten minutes and be allowed to swear freely, I should get all right; but no, the old chap in front didn't show the slightest inclination to stop—on, on, on! Not a track could I see; and how an elephant could possibly have chosen such an abominable way I could not understand. His talked-of sagacity was all nonsense, that was certain.

Every now and again my hat would scrape against some branch, and then I would give a start and stop, for the noise thus made always gives one the idea that something in the jungle has moved. Whenever I did this, Vellian invariably gave me a job in the back with the barrels of the rifle he was carrying—loaded. This, of course, made me start round to see what he wanted, thinking he had touched me to attract my attention to something. Turning sharply round, I always found my face right in his, the expression of terror depicted on his countenance being quite indescribable. Off would go my hat, caught by some thorn; thump would come Vellian's loaded rifle right in the small of my back. Swish! would go my hat against something. 'What's that?' would be the unuttered exclamation, quickly turning round, to find Vellian's nose in my mouth.

Oh, I would have given anything to swear! Never, till then, did I realise that swearing was really necessary. It is a safety-valve, and should be allowed to go off when steam gets beyond a certain point.

It must be ten or eleven o'clock. We have crawled ten or twelve

miles. I can't go on much longer. Heat!—why, perspiration was pouring out of us; our clothes were wringing wet; the only thing that did not look as if it was dying was the old chap in front. He had not turned a hair, and his tracking now was wonderful indeed. Not a sign, or track, or broken branch, or anything, could I see; but on he went—slowly, because locomotion had to be slow in such stuff, but with most wonderful certainty, as though he actually saw the elephant itself ahead of him. So we went on and on, from bad to worse, for another two hours or so, and then he suddenly stopped. I ran into 'L.' Vellian, of course, dashed the rifle into the same hole which he had almost jobbed right through me by this time. No one could see, and any stoppage in front meant a collision along the whole line.

For hours I had been carrying a 10-pound rifle. I had realised the earnestness of life. I had made up my mind that, once through with my first elephant, the rest were safe. Never, no never!—not for the finest tusker—would I again go through all the agony I had been enduring since six o'clock.

Yes, my mind was fully made up—this was my first and *last* elephant. I had thought of nothing but this determination for hours, when this sudden stoppage took place.

'What is up? Is he there?' was the expression on every face. All my keenness was back. I felt equal to anything.

'L.' and Bohomo hondi hold a whispered confab., and I almost kill myself in my efforts to hear what it is all about. Not a word can I make out. The excitement is intense—quite too awful. Then the old man disappears in the undergrowth, gliding away without the slightest sound, like a snake, going away without the least effort, the undergrowth closing behind him, leaving not a sign of him.

Crawling up to 'L.', I whisper, 'What is it?'

'Sh! sh!' says 'L.'

Now, my whisper had hardly been a whisper—I had *looked* it more than anything—and to be met with a scowl and 'Sh! sh!' was fearfully irritating. 'L.' then went on to whisper something, but what on earth he said I couldn't make out, for just then my hat brushed against a tree, deadening all other sounds. Having recovered this shock, I again looked 'What is it?' Thump came something into the small of my back, and, glaring round, I see my faithful Vellian, also looking 'What is it?' He, too, had crept up, terror depicted all over him. At this moment the

ludicrousness of the whole thing burst upon me. I couldn't help laughing. Seizing my handkerchief, I stuffed it into my mouth. Stop laughing I couldn't. The agonised expression on 'L.'s' face was terrible. Throwing myself on the ground, I buried my face in my arms; but whenever I looked up and saw the perspiring faces, protruding eyes, and woebegone appearance of the coolies, and the intense anxiety depicted on 'L.'s' face lest my giggling should be heard, off I went again and again into paroxysm after paroxysm of laughter. Looking up, however, on one of these occasions, I saw Bohomo hondi, who had returned as quietly as he had gone, staring at me with the utmost contempt and rage. I saw the old chap had lost all respect for me, and this stopped my giggling fit. One must maintain one's dignity even in a cane brake.

'The rogue was close here, had been lying down, but seemed restless and had got up and gone on,' said the old chap in a whisper—evidently implying that I was the cause.

'What do you propose?' said 'L.'

'I think I know where he is going, and we must make a detour and cut him off. He has gone to the river,' said Bohomo hondi.

'That is just as well,' said 'L.,' 'for I wouldn't go near him in this jungle.'

'Ne, ne,' mumbled the old man. (No, no, nor he either—that was very certain.)

We now turned to our right, and after some time, in the same sort of going we had been having so much of, struck a ridge with a very decent game-track on it. Here one could walk upright and in comparative comfort. The jungle got more open as we went along, and presently we struck on an old abandoned paddy-field—not a house to be seen, everything growing up into jungle.

'The people are all dead—fever,' said the old man, with the greatest unconcern. And I wondered how many villages he had seen thus quietly pass away.

From his age, which might have been centuries, but more from his utter unconcern, I came to the conclusion that he must have seen many. He seemed to think nothing whatever of it.

Crossing this woebegone and forlorn village, we stopped, and the old man said he would go and reconnoitre, and see if the 'rogue' hadn't stopped at the old tank here before going on as far as the river. The tank in all probability was dry, but still might have a little water in it, sufficient to tempt the elephant

down, he thought—so off he went to see, we sitting down meantime.

‘The tank is just here; the old man won’t be more than five minutes,’ whispered ‘L.’

Visions of water—cool, refreshing water—flitted before me, when, ‘Enawa Mahatmya,’ the old man was back. The rogue was there. He was down in the tank, and seemed very restless—we had better come quickly. Taking up a handful of sand, the old chap, holding his hand aloft, let it slowly pour away, observing most carefully which way the wind carried it. To me, uninitiated, there did not appear to be a breath of wind; but he made up his mind at once that we must go round. Trudging off, we once more crossed the abandoned paddy-field, and, entering the jungle, crept stealthily along.

Presently I heard something. It was not my confounded hat this time, but most surely a breaking branch. Yes, there goes another. The rogue had left the tank, then—he *was* restless.

How my heart throbbed against my ribs! There, at last, was the rogue. Staring into the jungle I could see nothing, but from the noise I knew he must be quite close.

Ah! Bohomo hondi points at something. ‘L.’ stoops, nods, and, turning round, beckons to me, his perspiring face beaming with delight. He points into the jungle, and, though I strain my eyes in that direction until they nearly drop out of my head, I can make out nothing.

How I did stare! I could see nothing—nothing whatever—nothing but jungle.

Suddenly something caught my eye. Good heavens! ’tis the rogue’s tail—here, within fifteen feet. I had all this time mistaken his huge form for a rock; I had no idea we were so close as that.

Yes, there he was—he evidently did not know we were there—there he was, slowly shaking one leg to and fro, and, with his ears cocked, keenly watching the path he had himself just come along. Yes, there was no doubt about it, he had either scented or heard us, and was now lying in wait to make a charge.

By Jove! how lucky it was he hadn’t done that in the fearful stuff we had crept through earlier in the day. We could never have escaped.

‘L.’ slowly, with his rifle clutched in his hand, creeps, inch by inch, nearer to the rogue.

He gets to within ten feet of him. The rogue stops shaking his leg to and fro, and suddenly wheels right round on 'L.'

'L.'s rifle is raised. Bang! bang!

There is a screaming trumpet, a swaying of trees in all directions, and the rogue has gone. 'Come on!' shouts 'L.'

Off we dash, tearing our way through the jungle, and the jungle tearing its way through us. The whole place is covered with blood, and there can be no doubt that the elephant is badly wounded.

'Sh! look out!' Bohomo hondi stops, and beckons me. I creep up to him, for 'tis my turn now. Oh, yes, there he is, looking straight at me, about twenty feet off.

'Look out, he's going to charge! Wait until he gets quite close; I'll back you up,' whispers 'L.'

Whrrrrrr! here he comes, everything falling in all directions. The noise of his trumpet, the swaying of the trees, the crashing, and then the awful 'thud'—who can describe them?

'Well done, old man. You stood that charge like a veteran.'

Yes, I had got my first elephant. How? Well, even now, after all this description, I hardly know what happened. He had charged right on to me and I had dropped him with my first shot. That was quite certain, for there he was; his huge carcass only seven feet from where I stood. 'Twas more luck than good management; had the bullet not killed him instantaneously he must have crushed me in his fall.

Where were the coolies? They were conspicuously absent. There was my other rifle, lying on the ground, but not a coolie to be seen.

The intrepid Vellian had not been able to stand that charge, and 'seeing Parpen get up a tree, why, he did so too.'

It was a magnificent elephant, fully nine feet. 'L.'s two bullets had penetrated a little too far back to be fatal. The shot he got was a difficult one—the suddenness of the elephant's swerve round putting him off, or possibly the bullet may have glanced off a sapling. 'Twas very seldom he let an elephant go. This old rogue, however, had foiled him several times.

Old Bohomo hondi meantime has taken off the tail, which he hands to me with great politeness, and I see I am once more installed in the old man's good graces, from the manner in which I shot my first elephant.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SANITY AND LUNACY.

It had been arranged that Frank Innes should dine, that evening, with the Countess and his betrothed; and at the appointed hour he arrived, to find only one of these ladies seated beside the crackling wood-fire, into which she was gazing, while she held a thin, white hand up to the blaze. She did not turn her head as he drew near, or she would have noticed that he was looking somewhat perturbed; he also might have been struck by the despondency expressed in her attitude, had not his attention been otherwise engaged.

'I say,' he began, before she could speak, 'I'm afraid there's going to be more bother about this business than we thought for. I've been to the Chancery and seen Lindsay, who is left in charge just now, and he scouts the idea of a marriage without full publicity. He says we couldn't possibly carry such a thing through unless we perjured ourselves—and most likely not then. What is to be done?'

The Countess shrugged her shoulders slightly. 'I have no suggestion to offer,' she replied; 'the control of events has been taken out of my hands, as I will explain to you presently, and I can't tell you what to do. But if it will give you any satisfaction to hear what you ought *not* to have done, I can easily tell you that. In the first place, you ought not to have taken Mr. Lindsay into your confidence.'

'But I didn't! I had to make inquiries of somebody, you know, and I mentioned no names. Of course I had to tell him that the lady was a minor, because that was one of the first things that he asked.'

'Mr. Lindsay is an inquisitive young man. With the clue that you have given him he will soon find out all that he wants to

know, and you may be sure that he will not keep such a good story to himself. That, however, concerns Lord and Lady Burcote more than it does you or me, and perhaps, as you say, it was necessary to consult somebody. But it certainly was not necessary that you should reveal your plans to the Marchese di Leonforte—of all people in the world !

‘Leonforte? Why I thought it was you who had told him ! I only saw him for a minute or two at the railway-station, and I can’t remember exactly what passed ; but I am sure he gave me to understand that he had heard all about it from you.’

‘He deceived you, then ; and I think, if I were in your place, I should feel that I had a score to settle with that man ; for he has played you a shabby trick. He must have gone and given information immediately after you left ; because Lord Burcote called here this afternoon to demand the restitution of his daughter, and his daughter appears to have felt that the legal position of the petitioner was unassailable. At all events she made no resistance.’

Frank dropped down upon a chair, opening his eyes wide in consternation. ‘Do you mean to say that Florry has gone?’ he ejaculated.

‘Oh, yes ; she has gone. Her father insisted, and, as I tell you, she didn’t resist.’

‘And you let her go !’

‘Am I a female brigand or a sorceress, to detain people under my roof, whether they will or no ? I used such poor powers of persuasion as I possess ; I tried to make the girl see that she might exact rather better terms from her father than he chose to offer her ; but I might as well have held my tongue. She left a message for you : I was to say that she couldn’t help abandoning you this time, but that she would never marry anybody else. No doubt she spoke sincerely.’

There was a pause of a few seconds ; after which Frank sighed and remarked, ‘Ah, well ! I never did feel much confidence in the success of this scheme of yours, you know. You meant kindly, and I’m awfully obliged to you for—for all that you’ve done for me ; but——’

‘But you would have been still more obliged if I had had sense enough to mind my own business ?’

‘Oh, no ; I don’t say that. Of course I’m sorry, and of course I wish we hadn’t attempted impossibilities ; because, for one

thing, I'm afraid poor Florry will have a bad time of it with her mother——'

'Her mother,' interrupted the Countess, 'is not to be told. That is, she will not be told by her husband or her daughter, who seem to be quite as much afraid of the woman as you are. It is true that Mr. Lindsay or some of his friends may see fit to enlighten her.'

'Oh, Lindsay is a good chap; he won't split,' answered Frank confidently. 'Well, it's a great relief to hear that old Burcote doesn't mean to betray us. And, after all,' he added presently, 'it's only a case of "As you were!"' Indeed, it's better than that; for I'm sure Florry will break off her engagement to Galashiels now.'

'So that a sensation of relief, everything considered, is what you actually experience,' observed the Countess. 'I congratulate you upon your philosophy, though I can't pretend to be educated up to the point of admiring it. You English have no blood in your veins; you talk about being in love, but you don't really understand the meaning of the word. Courage you may have—one can't deny you that, because you have so often shown that you know how to fight—only it isn't the sort of courage to make any one enthusiastic about you. Wasn't it Napoleon who said that you didn't know when you were beaten? He never could have said that if he had had to deal with you in a social, instead of a military, capacity! As for me, I have done with you. I can't help people who won't help themselves, and it is some comfort to know that neither your appetite nor your sleep will be interfered with by any mishaps that may fall to your lot.'

'But what would you have me do?' asked Frank, reasonably enough.

'I have told you already that I have no suggestion to offer. You recognise the force of facts, and so does Lady Florence—*je vous en fais mon compliment!* Personally, I should have liked you better if you had been a little more agitated; but that is a mere question of personal taste. Shall we go and eat our dinner now? I am happy to think that I may offer that humble suggestion without any fear of scandalising you.'

It must be confessed that Frank's agitation did not deprive him of all capacity for swallowing food; yet in the course of the next two hours he did manage to convince the irate Countess that he was less insensible than she had accused him of being. Her

anger, indeed, was to some extent a cloak for self-censure ; she could not but be conscious of his magnanimity in abstaining from the utterance of a word of reproach against her, and she had to acknowledge a certain grandeur in his quiet determination to go on hoping while he worked for his living.

‘All that is very pretty and very praiseworthy,’ she said at length ; ‘but I can’t sympathise with you, because you are patient and because I am impatient. When all is said, you are not to blame for having been born an inhabitant of a very chilly island. So, then, you propose to go quietly off to Milan, as if nothing had happened, to cultivate your voice and to trust to the powers above to befriend you at the proper moment ?’

‘Yes, I think so,’ answered Frank. ‘You see, I could do no good by returning to England, and Douglas would want to know what I meant by it, if I did. In spite of what you say and hint, I believe Florry will remain true to me : I shouldn’t help her, and I might get her into trouble, by attempting to see her again just now.’

‘You speak like the juvenile Solomon that you are : may you reap the just reward of your moderation in due season ! One doesn’t quite understand you ; but one is able, with a slight effort, to esteem you.’

After he had bidden her farewell she said to herself, ‘I shall leave him a fortune : that will be his only chance ; and if the girl is worth anything and keeps her word, he ought to win with it. Because, even supposing that this story doesn’t leak out, her value in the marriage-market will be a good deal depreciated by her rupture with the manufacturing lord, and Lady Burcote will think twice before turning her back upon a commoner as rich as Frank will be. So I shall accomplish my unique good deed, in spite of all, though I shall not witness the accomplishment of it. The misfortune is that Schott may keep me alive for several years yet.’

But that was not Dr. Schott’s belief or expectation. Excitement and disappointment had made his patient feverish, and she passed such a bad night that he would not let her leave her bed on the following morning. Although no explanation of Lady Florence Carey’s sudden arrival and equally sudden departure had been vouchsafed to him, he was not in much doubt as to what had occurred ; but, true to his recently adopted system, he abstained from remonstrance or dictation, merely remarking that he sup-

posed the Countess had now no special reason for lingering in the north of Europe.

‘I have no special reason for hurrying to the south,’ she answered rather pettishly. ‘That is, unless it is true, as I think I have heard, that consumptive people die more easily in warm than in cold climates. Is that the case?’

The Doctor’s guttural responsive laugh and gruff assertion that when he took people to the south it was to cure them, not to kill them, did not deceive her. The worthy, heavy-handed man meant well, but he was no adept in the art of deception. So, then, she was to die, and to die soon. Dr. Schott knew it, and she herself knew it, and there was nothing to grumble about, since she had made up her mind that this world had no attractions left for her. Nevertheless, it seemed hard. Probably it always does seem hard; although statistics show that suicides are upon the increase. The Countess, as she lay in bed, thinking of many things, was conscious of a clinging to existence which distressed and irritated her. She was not afraid of death, which is the universal destiny, and which no one, except a superstitious coward, ought to dread; her disappearance from earthly scenes would, she presumed, entail no suffering upon her, while it would be productive of substantial advantages to others. Consequently, her reluctance to disappear must be due to some lingering and perfectly absurd hope of earthly happiness. It was when she arrived at that logical conclusion that she found it impossible to lie in bed any longer and rang for her maid.

She was sitting in her boudoir, a few hours later, doing nothing at all and wishing that somebody—no matter who—would come and talk to her, when her major-domo brought her a card, upon which was inscribed the name of the Marchese di Leonforte. The gentleman, she was told, had been informed that the Countess was unwell, but had persisted, notwithstanding that intimation, in requesting admittance, and she granted his request with alacrity.

‘By all means bring him in,’ said she; and she added, under her breath, ‘Perhaps he will wish, before he goes away, that I had not been so complaisant.’

Leonforte stalked into the room with a gloomy, tragic air at which she did not refuse herself the satisfaction of laughing aloud.

‘I thought,’ said she, ‘that I was never to see your face again.’

Wasn't that the punishment with which you threatened me when you made your last impressive exit? But perhaps you feel capable of pardoning me now that you have achieved such a chivalrous victory over me, and perhaps you have come to enjoy your triumph. Is that it?'

'Madame,' replied Leonforte, 'the last time that I had the honour of visiting you, you called me an uncivilised Italian bully.'

'*Parfaitement*. I remember using the words, and I regret to add that nothing has occurred since then to make me alter my opinion. Won't you sit down? I haven't altered my opinion; still I confess that your recent conduct has revealed you to me in a rather new light. Perhaps I ought to have known that all bullies are mean; but, somehow or other, I did not imagine that you were mean enough to stab a man who had never injured you in the back, in order to avenge yourself upon a woman whom you had insulted. All this, however, helps to make you a fascinating study. What more can I do to draw you out, I wonder? Would it please you to hear that you have enraged me by foiling me? I make you welcome to that information.'

The Marchese was white with anger; but he controlled his wrath and his voice. 'I do not think it is true that I ever insulted you, Madame la Comtesse,' he replied. 'It is certainly true that you insulted me, and if I have enraged you by defeating your plans, I am not sorry for it. That, in truth, was what I hoped to do. But you are mistaken in thinking that I have come to Paris to enjoy the spectacle of your discomfiture.'

'Am I? Well, it is only fair to admit that you do not look as if you were enjoying yourself. What has procured me this unexpected pleasure, then? Couldn't you live without seeing me?'

'Ah,' exclaimed the Italian, wincing, as if he had received a physical wound, 'you are brutal!' He paused for a moment, and then continued: 'Listen, Madame la Comtesse; I do not know whether I love you or whether I hate you; I see by your eyes that you think I love you still, and it may be that you are right—I do not know! But this I know, that if I can inflict any pain upon you, in return for all the pain that you have given me, I will inflict it joyfully. All through these long months I have been thinking and thinking—it is possible that I am quite wrong; for you have been false with me from the very beginning—but the conclusion to which I have come at last is that, if you love anybody in the world, you love your husband.'

‘Oh, that is the conclusion to which you have come?’ said the Countess composedly. ‘Après?’

He scrutinised her pale face keenly; but could detect no symptom of emotion there. ‘Your husband,’ he resumed, ‘does not love you, and he does love that Miss Rowley of whom, I think, you used only to pretend to be jealous. I know that he loves her, because I surprised them together one evening in England not long ago, and what I saw left no room for doubt. Ah,’ he cried exultantly, as a sudden flush overspread the Countess’s cheeks, ‘I was not wrong, then! You do love him, and I am avenged!’

‘We are not at the Porte Saint-Martin,’ remarked the Countess, whose discomposure had been only momentary. ‘That speech might have been effective if it had been addressed to an audience of several hundreds; but upon the ears of a single listener it falls a little flat. For the rest, it would be cruel to grudge you your revenge—such as it is. It would be more complete and more satisfactory to you, no doubt, if I did not happen to be dying; but, if you care to consult my doctor, he will tell you that I am not far off death; and, since that is so, my husband’s *affaires de cœur* cannot affect me very profoundly. Let it be admitted that I love him and that, as you say, I only pretended to be jealous of Miss Rowley: what does all that matter now?’

Leonforte was horrorstruck. ‘Dying!’ he exclaimed—‘oh, no, not *dying*! You do not mean what you say!—it is impossible!’

‘It is the truth. I have no longer any illusion upon the subject, and what you have just been kind enough to tell me has helped to reconcile me to my fate. So, if you consider that you have paid me out, we may part friends, after all.’

It is always a hard matter to tell what influence any given incident or announcement may exercise upon so curiously complex a being as an educated Italian of the present day. Leonforte, one would have thought, ought not to have cared very much whether a woman who had treated him as the Countess Radna had done lived or died; but he did care. Gazing earnestly at her, he saw in her clear, transparent complexion, her wasted fingers and her sunken eyes, with the dark semi-circles beneath them, the confirmation of what she had stated to be the truth, and, seeing this, he was overwhelmed by a rush of sorrow and remorse. He fell upon his knees beside her and poured forth incoherent entreaties for pardon, accompanied by proposals which, to tell the truth,

were extravagant enough to justify the smile with which she listened to them. He had been mad—so he averred—to imagine that he could hate her; he adored her, and his adoration was so disinterested that he was ready to do anything on earth that she might command him to do, rather than let her succumb to a broken heart. He would hurry back to England; he would see Mr. Colborne; he would explain to the man how matters stood; he would drag him over to Paris, and all would yet be well. Because it was inconceivable that any human being could really prize Miss Rowley's affection above that of one so immeasurably her superior.

When he had calmed down a little the Countess said: 'I won't laugh at you; I have had an overdose of sanity lately, and my heart goes out to anyone who is emotional enough to talk like a lunatic. Still, it remains true that lunacy can accomplish nothing, and that all the emotion in the world will not soften hard facts. One hard fact is that my husband will hear of my death with some decent regret and with a good deal of inward relief: another is that by this time next year—or shall we say two years hence?—I shall have become a somewhat painful memory to you. *Allons!* Let us not quarrel with the Creator of our race, who, it must be assumed, had reasons for making us what we are. A pretty sort of existence we should lead if love were eternal, or if we were in sober reality as unselfish as we affect to be. All is for the best in the best sort of world that could have been constructed to hold us, and nothing that happens upon the surface of it is of supreme consequence. Nevertheless, I offer you my apologies. I have had little consideration for you, and I have goaded you into exhibiting yourself as—well, as not precisely a *preux chevalier*. We will shake hands and forgive one another before we say farewell for ever, *n'est-ce pas?*'

After a time he complied with her request; perhaps also by this time he has fulfilled her prediction respecting him; for nothing can be more sadly certain than that love is not eternal and that bygone sufferings are unpleasant to look back upon. He remained in Paris and called repeatedly to inquire after the Countess's health at her door; but he was never again admitted into her presence, nor was any prominent place assigned to him in her thoughts. There had been so many like him, or almost like him! And none of them had come to a tragic end.

CHAPTER XLV.

LOO COLBORNE'S LETTER.

'WELL, my dear girl,' remarked Lord Burcote to his daughter, with whom he had been temperately but fruitlessly reasoning during their railway journey from Dover to London, 'all I can say is I shouldn't care to be in your shoes! I've done the best I could for you; I don't want to bully you, and if you insist upon breaking off your engagement, I sha'n't scold you—though I think it is a thousand pities. But don't you flatter yourself that your mother will let you off so easily as that!'

'Oh, I know I shall catch it,' answered poor Lady Florence dolefully; 'there's no help for that. But she need never hear why I went to Paris, need she?'

She won't hear it from me; but I'm afraid she will from you, unless you keep a pretty careful watch over your lips. The whole thing looks so confoundedly suspicious, don't you see! It will be easy enough to trump up some explanation of your having cut short your visit; but why the deuce you should have changed your mind about Galashiels all of a sudden—that's what your mother will want to know; and unless she gets some sort of a satisfactory reply——'

'But no sort of reply could be satisfactory to her,' observed Lady Florence pertinently.

'H'm!—well, no; I suppose not.'

For some moments Lord Burcote pensively studied the pages of the 'Field,' which he had just purchased; but probably it was not the perusal of the sporting intelligence that caused him to look up presently and say, with an air of calm decision, 'I shall go to Newmarket.'

'Oh, *how* I wish you would take me with you!' sighed the girl.

Lord Burcote grunted and retired behind his newspaper once more, so absurd an aspiration as that requiring no articulate response. Never in his life had he dreamt of taking a daughter of his to Newmarket, except on the occasion of some important race-meeting, and never had a daughter of his dreamt of requesting him to do so. It has already been intimated that his lordship

was not a man of domestic habits. But now he began to ask himself whether precedent might not be departed from for this once. It seemed rather too bad to run away from the impending storm and leave this poor little defenceless girl to bear the whole brunt of it; Lady Burcote, he knew, would have people staying in the house for some time to come, and would therefore be unable to leave home; angry letters might be endured with equanimity, and if a respite is not quite the same thing as a reprieve, it is at least better than nothing. The outcome of these cogitations was that he laid down the 'Field' at length and said:

'Look here, Florry; I'll tell you what I'll do with you, if you like. We won't go home at all; we'll stop in London to-night and run down to Newmarket together to-morrow; and then you can fire your shot from a distance. This is very good of me, you know, Florry.'

'I should rather think it was!' exclaimed his grateful daughter; and Lord Burcote was promptly rewarded by an embrace which it is to be feared he did not appreciate quite as highly as some other people might have done.

'Don't choke me,' he gasped; 'and for the love of Heaven, don't begin to cry! Now, Florry, if you don't stop crying at once, I'll send you straight home—I will indeed! You will have plenty of excuses for weeping later on, you may depend upon it; for the time being, we had better keep as cheerful as we can.'

It is pleasant to be able to cite an instance of genuine kindness and courage on the part of this anything but exemplary old nobleman. Having taken his erring daughter under his protection, he did protect her to the utmost of his ability; during several weeks he shielded her from the just and dire wrath of a lady who clamoured daily, through the post, to get at her; he likewise stood between her and Lord Galashiels, who journeyed down to Newmarket from Scotland, in a towering rage, to speak his mind. But neither Lord Burcote nor anybody else could do more than retard the progress of limping Nemesis, and Lady Florence, as she had anticipated, 'caught it' in the long run.

Perhaps she deserved to catch it; perhaps her conduct, if not quite so infamous as her mother averred, had been of a nature to merit a few of the epithets which were hurled at her. For indeed, as things fell out, the affair proved a most unfortunate one, and the worst of it was that it was published abroad. Somebody—possibly Mr. Lindsay—must have been indiscreet; everything

became known ; the news flew from mouth to mouth with astonishing rapidity ; and Lord Galashiels, so far from accepting his dismissal, indignantly claimed his release.

‘ You have ruined yourself hopelessly and irretrievably ! ’ was Lady Burcote’s greeting to her daughter when, after many delays, the delinquent was at length brought home. ‘ The only thing that you can do now is to enter some hospital as a sick-nurse and never be heard of again. ’

Lady Florence made the best retort that could have been made to this and to similar gibes by qualifying herself for admission into a hospital in another capacity. She had no business whatsoever to fall ill, when there was nothing except fright and vexation the matter with her ; but ill she became, and the doctor had to be sent for, and the wretched man prescribed tonics and rest and change of air. As if she had not had more change of air than was good for her already ! Lord Burcote, however, felt strong enough to insist upon obedience to medical orders ; so the culprit was packed off on a visit to an invalid aunt of hers who dwelt on the southern side of the Isle of Wight, thus, through no merit of her own, being delivered from purgatory.

Meanwhile, the whole county, not to say the whole country, was discussing her adventure with the keenest interest ; and, amongst others, Mrs. Colborne, who had returned to Stoke Leighton to take care of her son, had a good deal to say upon the subject. Mrs. Colborne was of opinion that H  l  ne’s behaviour had been simply outrageous, and she did not refuse herself the pleasure of expressing her opinion.

‘ One wouldn’t so much mind,’ she said, ‘ if one didn’t feel that it has all been done on purpose. ’

‘ Has anyone suggested that it was done by mistake ? ’ asked Douglas.

‘ You know what I mean : it has been done on purpose to vex and embarrass you. She couldn’t have had any other motive. ’

‘ But why should I be vexed and embarrassed ? I am neither the one nor the other ; and I remember that there was a time, not so very long ago, when you couldn’t find words strong enough to express your admiration for H  l  ne’s disinterested kindness to Frank. ’

‘ That was before all these distressing complications had arisen. Naturally, I wanted to think as well as I possibly could of my son’s wife ; I don’t think you ought to reproach me for that. I

never liked your marriage and never wished for it, Heaven knows !'

The marriage for which Mrs. Colborne had avowedly wished would doubtless have been a more suitable one, and she was perhaps entitled to grumble a little over the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. At all events, Douglas did not grudge her that solace, nor was he so unkind as to remind her that another marriage upon which she had set her heart had been rendered possible only through the very substantial aid contributed thereto by her daughter-in-law. Mrs. Colborne was, and knew herself to be, such a thoroughly good and well-meaning woman that her conscience seldom gave her any trouble.

Probably she meant well, (though it is quite impossible to say what good object she can have had in view), by blowing Peggy Rowley's trumpet as loudly and persistently as she did at this time. Peggy was entertaining a large circle of guests—important and influential guests, including a bachelor baronet, well known in the political world, and a widowed viscount of the highest personal character and social standing. Both of them, it was rumoured, were paying their addresses to her, and it was extremely likely, Mrs. Colborne said, that she would end by accepting one or other of them. There was no reason why she shouldn't; indeed, there was every reason why she should, except—and here Mrs. Colborne would interrupt herself with a deep sigh.

From motives which will be understood, Douglas excused himself from accompanying his mother and his sister in their frequent visits to Swinford Manor, declining also two invitations to dine at that hospitable mansion. At the bottom of his heart he thought Peggy might have spared him those invitations. She had told him frankly that she had been more or less compromised by his society: did she want to convince him now that the inconvenience was a thing of the past? Or was it her viscount or her baronet whom she desired to convince? In either case, he preferred to remain at home, and we may be sure that he received a full and particular account of all Peggy's sayings and doings from Loo, whose indiscretion knew no bounds.

'My dear girl,' Douglas said to her at length, (for in speaking to Loo it was permissible to make use of plainer language than could have been safely addressed to his mother), 'there really is not the least necessity to keep on telling me what an idiot I have

been. If I could begin my life over again, I shouldn't be situated as I am ; but Providence, in its inscrutable wisdom, usually refuses to let us profit by the lessons of experience. I don't wonder at your wishing that I had married Peggy Rowley ; but, as I didn't, and as I can't, the only thing left for me to do is to look pleasant and buy her the prettiest wedding-present that I can afford.'

'You would if you could, then ?' asked Loo eagerly.

'I didn't say so ; it would have been very silly and slightly immoral of me to say so. I only want you to realise that all these tacit rebukes of yours are, to say the least of them, superfluous.'

Loo, being a good deal more in awe of her brother than she was of Peggy Rowley, held her peace in the presence of the former, but faithfully reported his observations to the latter, who did not forbid her to take such liberties. Peggy, of course, only laughed ; still it seemed possible that something so nearly resembling an avowal might lead her to pause before accepting either of the eligible candidates for her hand, and to produce that effect upon her was her informant's object. Loo Colborne was one of those perfectly unselfish beings who are the salt of the earth and whose virtue must be its own reward, since it is never by any chance recognised ; yet so queer is the mixture of good and evil which constitutes our mortal nature that she actually exclaimed to herself, one evening, after she had said her prayers and was about to get into bed, 'If only H  l  ne would die !'

The very next morning a letter was brought to her which, it is but fair to say, filled her with the most poignant grief and remorse. If all our hastily muttered wishes could be gratified, some, though perhaps not all, of us might feel as sorry and as ashamed as Loo did when she read the following lines, written in a trembling hand which she did not at first recognise as that of one from whom she had had many previous epistles.

'I am so ill,' the Countess Radna wrote, 'that I can never be well again, and it is doubtful whether I shall ever leave my bed again. I wish to see Douglas once more before I die. Will you ask him to come to me ? And will you tell him that, if he comes, he will find me a much more reasonable and much less disagreeable person than I was when he saw me last ? There are a few things that I should like to say to him ; but they are not unpleasant things, and I will make no scene. Tell him that I was angry once and that I am not in the least angry now. When one

is at the point of death everything looks different. I am too tired to explain, and you would not understand if I did; only you will understand quite well when your own time comes. I wonder whether you will cry or whether you will jump for joy when this news reaches you! Most likely you will do both; for you are a dear, good little girl, and you deserve the best of husbands. Whoever or whatever he may be, you are sure to think him the best of husbands, and I daresay that the most sensible clause in the long will which I executed the other day is that which will give you a little money to start housekeeping upon.

Neither the conclusion nor the preceding portion of the Countess's letter caused Loo to jump for joy; but she did weep copiously, and she lost no time in complying with her correspondent's request.

'Oh, Douglas,' she sobbed, after her brother had rapidly run his eye over the sheet of note-paper which she handed to him, 'how dreadful it is! If I had only known that she was ill I would never have been such a brute! You *will* go to her, won't you?'

'Of course I shall go,' answered Douglas rather brusquely. 'There's an up train at eleven o'clock. If you will tell my mother and beg her to excuse me for not saying goodbye to her, you will do me a real kindness. I may be absent for some time, and there are matters of business which must be attended to before I start. Do you see?'

'Yes, I see, and I'll manage so that you shall not be bothered,' answered Loo, who in truth was not so dull but that she could understand his meaning and his feelings. Her mother, she knew, would catechise him, sympathise with him, perhaps even offer to go to Paris with him; whereas it was evident that he wished to be left alone and that to leave him alone was the one and only thing that could be done for him.

So Mrs. Colborne was provisionally informed of nothing more than that the Right Honourable gentleman would have to go up to town that morning to transact public business—which was strictly true. It would be time enough to make further revelations later in the day, Loo thought.

Well was it for Douglas that public affairs really did claim all the attention that he could give to them until the hour of his departure from Charing Cross; but when once he had seated himself in the train, the consideration of private affairs could no longer be postponed, and the more he considered them the more

sad and despondent he became. All day long he had been cherishing a half-acknowledged hope that matters were less serious than they had been represented and that he would reach his journey's end only to be laughed at by Dr. Schott; but now, while the express rushed southwards through the night, and while by the light of his reading-lamp he perused again and again the ill-written lines which his sister had handed over to him, his heart sank. It might not be true—he trusted it was not—that *Hélène* was dying; but it was certain that she thought so, and certain also that she must be dangerously ill. Nothing else would ever have induced her to make that appeal.

Now, Douglas Colborne was a straightforward, clear-headed man, and the gnawing remorse which kept him broad awake all that long night through was not due to any misgivings as to the course which he had adopted with respect to his wife since she had declared her independence of him. He did not see how he could have acted otherwise than as he had done; he had simply complied with her wish, after making overtures which she had deliberately and even scornfully rejected; no reasonable being could assert that he had treated her badly or that she had treated him well. Nevertheless, hard facts, unanswerable though they are, will not explain everything; he had loved her once and she had once loved him: whose fault was it that that mutual love had been extinguished? Just because he was straightforward and clear-headed he was unable to grant himself a clean bill of indemnity. Extinguished their bygone love undoubtedly was: he had no illusion upon that point. She might have sent for him in order to forgive him; but she assuredly had not sent for him in order to tell him that there had been any misunderstanding; while he, on his side, could only confess that he repented of a marriage which she had forewarned him that he would regret. But would he have repented, and would she ever have ceased to love him, if he had been less cold and hard with her? That was the question that troubled him. He did not, because he could not, formally ask himself another and a more pertinent question. Her jealousy of *Peggy Rowley*—if indeed she had been jealous—had been utterly devoid of excuse or foundation. Besides, he did not want to think about *Peggy*, who was going to marry *Lord This* or *Sir Somebody That*, who had been a friend of his and might possibly continue to be his friend, but who had evidently never dreamt of being anything more. He was so determined to

banish Peggy from his mind that he thought of her almost as much as he did of his wife during the journey from Calais to Paris.

But when he betook himself to the Avenue Friedland, the next morning, and when the Baroness von Bickenbach, weeping noisily, came into the deserted drawingroom to receive him, he forgot Peggy Rowley, forgot his wrongs, his doubts and his regrets, and realised only that his first love lay dying and calling for him.

‘Alas, yes!’ sobbed Bickenbach, in answer to his first question, ‘she is as ill as it is possible to be. The doctors all say so—we have had four of them, and they can do nothing. Dr. Schott told me long ago that there was no hope; but he did not think the end would come so soon, and I did not quite believe what he said. If I had, I should have taken it upon myself to write to you before now. And every hour she asks whether you have arrived yet!’

Dr. Schott, who entered the room presently, was less agitated, but not less despondent. ‘You can see the Countess as soon as you please, sir,’ said he; ‘it will do her no harm to see you, because nothing can do her harm now. The disease has made unusually rapid progress, and it has become a question of weeks—perhaps of days. I have done my best; but the best that physicians can do in such cases as hers amounts to very little.’

Douglas waved him aside not over courteously. He had never liked the stout German doctor, who, to be sure, had never been very fond of him, and he did not care to listen to a medical diagnosis. He turned to the Baroness and begged her to let his wife know that he was there.

‘Oh, she has already been told,’ answered Bickenbach, drying her eyes and thrusting her handkerchief into her pocket. ‘Please to follow me, and I will take you to her.’

CHAPTER XLVI.

RECONCILIATION.

DOUGLAS’S first impression, when he saw his wife sitting up in bed, wrapped in an elaborate and costly *peignoir* and covered up to her knees by an eiderdown quilt of pale pink satin, was that he had been scared without sufficient cause. She did not appear to be dying; she did not even look very ill. Her cheeks, it was true,

had lost roundness of outline, but there was a bright colour upon them, and her eyes also were bright and clear. Sickness—especially the kind of sickness which had her in its grip—admits of picturesque accessories, if only the sufferer be wealthy enough to indulge in them; death does not always present itself under an ugly aspect, nor does it invariably frighten lookers-on by ghastly signs of its approach. Moreover, there was nothing tragic or affecting in the Countess's salutation.

'How good of you to have come at once!' she said, smiling pleasantly upon him. 'I ought to apologise for having sent such an urgent summons; but really, when I wrote to your sister, it looked as if there was no time to be lost. Now I have taken a turn for the better, and I may hold on for a few more weeks, or possibly months. *N'est-ce pas?*' she added, turning to a Sister of Charity, who was stationed by her bedside.

'*Plait-il, madame?*' returned the Sister in those patient, melancholy accents which belong to her class and are as much a part of their equipment as their trailing robes, their white faces and their unwearied watchfulness.

'You can leave us, *ma sœur*,' said the Countess; 'if I want anything, I will ring for you. You too, my good Bickenbach; go away, and try to pick up a more cheerful countenance to bring back with you. To confess the truth, it is not amusing to die; but that is no reason why people who are going to live for a great many years yet should render the process additionally dismal by pulling long faces. While life lasts, let us make the most of it.'

After her orders had been obeyed, she glanced at Douglas, who had drawn nearer, and said: 'Don't you agree with me? Tears may be shed, and perhaps a few ought to be shed, when the lamentable event has occurred; but there is no necessity to take time by the forelock. That sort of thing, as Dr. Schott very truly says, is so discouraging for the patient!'

Douglas took his wife's hand and looked down upon her with a pained and puzzled expression. 'I can't believe that your life is really in danger, *Hélène!*' he exclaimed at length.

'You would have believed it if you had seen me yesterday or the day before: one has ups and downs; but one's doom is sealed. If you think that I exaggerate, ask Dr. Schott, who has abandoned all clumsy attempts at pretence. Pray don't put me to shame by imagining that I should have sent for you if I had been going to recover.'

Douglas, still holding her hand, dropped on his knees beside her. 'Ah, don't talk like that!' he entreated. 'Whether you had sent for me or not, I should have come to you the moment that I heard that you were ill; and, whatever you may say, I won't give up hope of your recovering yet.'

The Countess laughed. 'You will always be conventional,' she remarked. 'After all, it would be too much to expect of any man that he should abstain from uttering conventionalities in such a situation. We will take them as having been uttered and properly acknowledged, though, and we will proceed to business. First of all, I want to tell you about the will that I have made. I have not left you much: after thinking it over, I felt sure that you would not like to be enriched by me.'

Douglas hastily shook his head, and immediately afterwards wished that he had been less precipitate and unfeeling.

'Naturally you would not,' resumed the Countess; 'no man could endure to feel that he was under any sort of obligation to a woman who had done her utmost to spoil his life for him. So I have only bequeathed you enough to keep people from asserting that we had had a deadly quarrel. I have done what seemed to be the right thing for my relatives, who, as you know, are distant relatives, and I have distributed some trifling legacies amongst my friends, of whom your sister is one; but I have provided rather magnificently for Frank Innes. I hope you don't object to that?'

'Why should I object? But, Hélène——'

'Please, let me finish. Every now and then I get fits of coughing which reduce me to a state of total collapse, and I want to say what I have to say to you while I can. Of course you have heard of the *fiasco* that I made of my attempt to arrange a runaway marriage for Frank. I should like to repair it, if it isn't irreparable, and I should think it might be repaired by means of money. Most misfortunes can be repaired in that way. At all events, I am sure Lord and Lady Burcote think so.'

'Oh, I daresay they do.'

'And you will give the boy your support and do what you can to make two silly people happy, will you? I grant you that it is silly to marry merely because one chances to be in love; yet I am not sure that it isn't sometimes better to be silly than to be wise.'

'Of course I shall be very glad to promote Frank's happiness, so far as it lies in my power to do so; but I doubt whether he wants my support or whether it would be of the slightest use to

him,' answered Douglas. The truth was that he had not come all the way to Paris to talk about Frank Innes, and he could scarcely believe that he had been beckoned thither for that purpose. 'I don't know why it should be considered silly to marry for love,' he added presently.

'Don't you? Yet one would think that you ought to know, if anybody ought. But perhaps you will say that you were mistaken in imagining that you married from that motive. You certainly did imagine yourself in love at the time: the unfortunate thing is that there is no test by which one can distinguish imagination from reality at such times.'

'Did I deceive myself or did you, H  l  ne?' asked Douglas sadly. 'You told me at Luchon that you loved me; you told me so many times after that, and I am sure you were speaking the truth. To this hour I am absolutely ignorant of what it was that made you change.'

'Are you so certain that I ever changed? Hasn't it occurred to you that, if I had changed, I should have done as other people do and said nothing about it? Those who don't care don't think it worth while to make a fuss. I admit that it isn't worth while to make a fuss even when one does care, and after a fashion I am sorry that I have caused you so much trouble and perplexity. But that is because I am going to die. If I were going to live, you wouldn't be here now, and I shouldn't be speaking to you so candidly.'

'But you aren't speaking candidly,' Douglas protested. 'Or, at least, if you are, you are not speaking comprehensibly. Do you wish me to believe that you care for me still; and that you only left me because you fancied that I had ceased to care for you?'

The Countess nodded. 'That,' she replied, 'is precisely what I wish you to believe; and, since it is the fact, you can't go far astray by believing it. No doubt I should have shown better taste if I had remained silent; but death has its privileges, and the distinction between good and bad taste doesn't strike me as particularly important now.'

'Oh, H  l  ne, why didn't you say this before? As if I should ever at any time have dreamt of asking myself whether what you said to me was in good taste or not! The long and the short of it seems to be that when you cast me off you were under some absurd misapprehension.'

'No, my dear Douglas, I was not under any misapprehension. My eyes were wide open—as wide open as they are now—and I

knew more about you than than you knew about yourself. Perhaps even more than you know at the present moment. I asked your sister to tell you that I had been angry once, and that I wasn't angry any more. That is perfectly true; and if I hadn't loved you, I daresay I might have gone on living with you, though I doubt whether I could have endured Stoke Leighton for more than a month or six weeks at a time. But as I did love you, it was necessary for me to leave you—*voilà!* I am not going to make a scene—I promised in that same letter that I wouldn't make a scene—but I had it in my mind to make this confession before taking leave of you and of life, and now it has been made. If you will accept it as an excuse and try to think kindly of me in the future, when you think about me at all, I shall be quite satisfied.'

What was an honest man to do or say by way of response? Douglas Colborne was an honest man; but in his sorrow and self-reproach he committed himself to statements which were not strictly veracious, and he was made to suffer for his well-intentioned and half-conscious duplicity. He was on his knees by his wife's bedside and she was gently stroking his hair when she said:

'You must not be so distressed; you have nothing to accuse yourself of, and I have nothing to forgive. Everybody would tell you that I have been in the wrong from first to last, and everybody would be almost right. Not quite right, though; because, as I say, there is still this excuse for me that I loved you and love you. And you don't love me.'

'Why won't you believe that I love you?' groaned Douglas.

'I believe that you are fond of me, and that is enough now. Only it wasn't enough then. Come, let us decide this question, once for all, and have done with protestations which, if you will think of it, can't really be of supreme consequence to a dying woman. Can you, upon your honour as an English gentleman, assure me that you love me more than you love Miss Rowley?'

He might have answered that he did without telling a deliberate lie. At the moment he sincerely believed that he did. A thousand memories were stirring his heart and filling his eyes with tears; he thought, and he was not mistaken in thinking, that he had become alienated from his wife by her treatment of him; he perceived that her treatment of him had been neither unnatural nor unpardonable, and he would have given ten years of his life to be able to blot out the events of the past twelve-month. Yet he hesitated; and when he spoke, his speech was

not convincing. To swear that he had never breathed a syllable to Peggy Rowley which could have been construed as implying any warmer sentiment than that of friendship; to mention that, if current rumours were correct, she was likely ere long to contract a matrimonial alliance with one of two or three gentlemen who were said to be attentive to her, and to accuse the Marchese di Leonforte of having listened to, and probably repeated, gossip for which there was not a shadow of foundation—all this scarcely met the requirements of the case.

'*Allons!*' said the Countess, when he had done; 'we will talk no more of Miss Rowley. I do not think that she will marry any of those gentlemen; I think that she will marry you, and I hope that she will. Why should I not hope so, seeing that I wish your life to be a pleasant one, and that mine is so nearly at an end? I see and know that you love me in one way, though not in the old way; and I am contented. Please take my word for it that I am contented. Then we shall be able to talk together comfortably and happily as long as you can stay here. Only I can't talk much more now. Would it be asking too much of you, I wonder, to beg you to remain in Paris for another week? I am all alone, you see; for the Sister is hardly a companion, and Bickenbach gets on my nerves with her suppressed sobs and Dr. Schott has a way of looking at me as if he were calculating the exact number of days that his remedies might be expected to keep me alive.'

Even if Douglas had not wished to remain in Paris for an indefinite length of time, he could not have resisted an entreaty of which the pathos was only enhanced by the cheerful accents in which it was expressed. But he did wish to remain, and he hoped, besides, that it might come within his power, after a time, to persuade his wife that she was mistaken as to his ulterior intentions. For the moment, it seemed best to take her at her word, to acquiesce in her banishment of Peggy Rowley from the field of discussion, and to leave her to the repose which the Sister of Charity, who now appeared in answer to the bell, pronounced to be imperatively necessary.

He bent over her and kissed her on the forehead, promising that he would return the next day and every day, until——

'Until the end?' she interrupted.

'No; until you begin to get better and tell me that you want to be rid of me.'

Was there really a chance that she might get better? Dr. Schott declared that there was none—not the faintest. Yet even Dr. Schott had become less positive and less pessimistic at the end of a week, during which his patient certainly made a wonderful rally, and in the course of which her husband spent several hours with her daily.

‘Phthisis is a lingering disease,’ he told Douglas, on the expiration of the above-named period; ‘nothing can be called absolutely impossible in the case of those who are afflicted with it, except complete restoration to health, and I do not deny, sir, that you have accomplished something which is beyond the reach of medical science. It remains to be seen whether you will be able to carry on your work.’

Douglas was determined that he could and would. So far, he had not only been successful but had deserved success; for he had been as patient, as considerate and as unselfish as a man could be. Recognising—rather dimly, it may be, yet recognising—the errors of which he had been guilty in the past, he had accepted the part assigned to him by *Hélène*; he had refrained from agitating her by explanations in which she probably would not have believed; he had merely striven to show her, through those trifling attentions which women love, that she was dear to him, and he had made no reference to their reconciliation, beyond announcing, as a matter of course, that as soon as she was well enough to travel they would move southwards together. If his heart was aching all the time; if he longed to confess that he had been blind and stupid, and if he had managed to convince himself that his first love was still his only love, he had the good sense and the forbearance to hold his peace upon such subjects. Perhaps she understood and was satisfied: she was, at all events, grateful to him and told him so.

Bickenbach, for her part, was both grateful and jubilant.

‘Ah, dear sir,’ the worthy woman exclaimed one day, ‘you have saved her life; and from the beginning I have felt sure that you could save her life, if you would! I do not think that she will die now; and I hope and pray that you have many years of happiness before you; yet, if a misfortune were to happen——’

‘The misfortune isn’t going to happen,’ Douglas declared,

‘I trust not; yet, if it did—— Most likely you do not feel as I do; but to me it is terrible to think that my dear Countess might die without the consolations of religion. If you could but

persuade her—you who have already accomplished a miracle—if you could but persuade her to see a priest!’

Oddly enough, that concession was obtained from the invalid without any difficulty, when her husband asked it of her as a personal favour.

‘I am only an ignorant sceptic,’ she answered, ‘and the Holy Roman Church knows how to deal leniently with sceptics who have not learning to argue and would gladly believe, if they could. Select a priest of the right kind and he will not find me troublesome. When all is said, Christianity has no rival; a compromise hasn’t yet been discovered between its incredible dogmas and the agnosticism which is only a mild synonym for atheism.’

So the priest was found, and did his work after a fashion which was satisfactory to Bickenbach and, let us hope, satisfactory also to one who may have been a Christian without knowing it. For the rest, it seemed probable that ample time would still be allowed to him to inculcate any teaching that he may have deemed requisite; because the Countess was now able to leave her bed for several hours every day, and, though desperately weak, was in good spirits and free from pain.

Yet neither priest nor husband nor any other mortal could really accomplish the miracle which poor Bickenbach had hastily ascribed to one of them, and the calamity—if it was in truth a calamity—which bystanders had almost ceased to fear occurred at last quite suddenly and quietly. One afternoon the Countess had lain down upon the sofa to rest for a while, as it had become her custom to do, and had fallen asleep, when her laboured breathing ceased. The Sister of Charity thought at first that she had fainted; but Dr. Schott, who was hastily summoned, pronounced life to be extinct, and Douglas Colborne, on reaching the house at his usual time, was met by the intelligence that he was a widower.

The shock was a terrible one to him; he did not get over it for many months; perhaps he has not quite got over it even now and never will quite get over it, although he has long since recovered in the sense in which we must all recover of our sorrows unless we are to be killed by them. Whether Douglas had ceased to love his wife at the time of her death or not, he did not believe that he had ceased to love her, and assuredly he was—to borrow the phrase which she herself had used—very fond of her. He had not said this to her in so many words, nor had he told her a

hundred things which he had wanted to tell her; and therefore it was that he could neither console nor forgive himself.

Being, however, of a reserved temperament, and having learnt to control his emotions, he disappointed Bickenbach by his abstinence from any loud demonstration of grief. The good Baroness thought him cold and heartless; as did also the various distinguished personages with whom his wife's death brought him into temporary contact. A lady of such vast possessions and such exalted rank as the Countess Radna cannot die without causing numerous disturbances and complications, and with these it became Douglas's immediate duty to deal. No doubt it was a good thing for him that he was thus forced to bestir himself; no doubt, too, there were circumstances connected with his bereavement which rendered it less hard to bear than it would have been, had it befallen him a year earlier; yet he could not quite agree with his mother, who wrote to him in terms of the warmest sympathy, and ended by expressing a pious conviction that Heaven had ordered all for the best. He knew very well what Mrs. Colborne meant by that, and he winced as he read the words. Unfortunately, he could not resent them; for he felt that he had given her some right to hint at comfort of a nature which it was out of the question for him to contemplate.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MRS. COLBORNE FEELS NO ANXIETY.

ONE afternoon in mid-winter Frank Innes entered the drawing-room of Lord Burcote's London residence in Eaton Square, the family having come up to town, as everybody must at some time between the first of November and the first of January, in order to purchase clothes and Christmas presents. Lady Burcote, who was toasting her toes before the fire, while she critically studied a collection of fashion-plates, rose as the young man advanced, and greeted him with much friendliness.

'How do you do, Mr. Innes?' said she. 'Well; you have seen Florry, I suppose?'

'Yes; I have seen her, thank you,' answered Frank; 'and, from what she tells me, perhaps I may take it that—in short, that it's all right.'

‘Of course it is all right; and I don’t mind confessing to you that it would have been all right even if you hadn’t come into a fortune. You made it almost impossible for the girl to marry any one but you by your behaviour in the autumn—which was all wrong. I daresay you will acknowledge now that your behaviour was about as infamous as it could be.’

‘I will acknowledge anything you like, Lady Burcote,’ answered Frank, laughing.

‘Oh, it doesn’t matter, since that poor, dear woman has made every reparation in her power by dying and leaving you rich; only you couldn’t have known that she was going to do either the one or the other, and you don’t seem to have troubled yourself much to think about the inevitable consequences of your actions. A nice position you would have landed us in if we had had to marry our daughter to a professional singer who had no more chance of making money professionally than any other clever *amateur*! And, as I told Lord Burcote at the time, that is just what we should have had to do, if you had insisted; because nobody else would have looked at the girl after such an *esclandre*. By the way, I trust that you have given up all idea of singing in public.’

‘Oh, yes; I’ll undertake never to sing in public, if you had rather I didn’t: under the circumstances, it isn’t necessary. All the same, I believe I should have succeeded.’

‘You are most welcome to cherish that belief, I’m sure; and you are welcome, into the bargain, to other successes which you haven’t exactly earned. Of course you set me down as a worldly and unnatural mother.’

‘If I did, I shouldn’t be rude enough to say so,’ Frank declared.

‘Not to my face, you mean; you wouldn’t hesitate to say so behind my back, and no doubt you have said so scores of times. But if, by an impossibility, you were a mother, and if you hadn’t too much money, and if you had a troop of daughters, and if it were your duty—as it certainly would be—to find husbands for them, you would understand that what looks like selfishness isn’t really selfishness. What personal profit do you suppose that I could ever have got out of Lord Galashiels? If he had asked me to stay with him for a week in the course of the year, that is about all that he would have felt bound to do for me. No, my dear Mr. Innes; the people who sneer at match-making mammas might find plenty to sneer at in themselves, if they cared to look

for it, and though I don't pretend to be romantic or quixotic, I may at least claim to be no hypocrite. You are welcome because an extraordinary caprice on the part of the Countess Radna, (whose memory I shall always bless) has made you wealthy. You wouldn't have been welcome if you had been poor; but, as I told you just now, you would have been accepted, nevertheless, because there would have been no alternative. I have far more right to abuse you than you have to abuse me; but I won't insist upon my rights. Let us shake hands and say no more about it.'

Frank willingly assented. He was nothing if not good-natured; he could not but admit that Lady Burcote put her case plausibly, and no sensible man wishes to start upon bad terms with his mother-in-law. Besides, he could not for the life of him have quarrelled with anyone at that moment. Fortune had treated him more than kindly; he was young, he was healthy, he was rich, and the girl whom he loved had just given him assurances which were in every respect satisfactory. With very slight additional provocation, he would have kissed Lady Burcote; though there could be no sort of certainty as to the effect of such a salute upon her ladyship's complexion.

Lady Burcote, it may be assumed, was not ambitious of being embraced by the young man upon whom she had decided to bestow her only unmarried daughter; for she soon dismissed him, with the comforting remark that he need not trouble to approach her husband with any formal demand.

'I will answer for Lord Burcote,' she said. 'For reasons best known to himself, he has been posing as Florry's best friend all this time, and he will be delighted to hear that I, who am in reality her best friend, am perfectly satisfied to let her have her own way. I trust you have had the common decency to pay a handsome sum in order that masses may be said for the repose of the Countess Radna's soul.'

Frank, it must be owned, had neglected to perform that act of gratitude; but he was not ungrateful, nor was he free from a certain sense of shame in his exultation. Yet it was no fault of his that the Countess Radna's death had brought him happiness, and perhaps it would not be anybody's fault if a similar result should prove to have been produced in the case of the Countess's husband. He had not seen his cousin since the melancholy event which had brought about a voluminous correspondence between them; but he was to go down to Stoke Leighton that evening,

and he endeavoured, on the way, to rehearse an interview which, he perceived, would call for some little display of tact on his part. Douglas, he had been given to understand, had inherited but a small portion of his late wife's wealth; he himself had inherited a very large portion of it; and it seemed doubtful whether he ought to look sad or glad or apologetic or simply blank.

Mrs. Colborne, who received him on his arrival, set his mind at rest.

'Douglas has felt the shock a good deal,' she said; 'but he is getting over it, and he evidently doesn't care to talk about it. You had better not condole with him. Your good luck has given him the greatest pleasure, and he is in hopes that you have brought him some other news upon which he may congratulate you. You have? Well, I am sincerely glad to hear it; and so, I am sure, will he be. Poor Hélène! One does most sincerely grieve to think that her life should have been cut short; and yet——'

'And yet one can't help rejoicing. It is rather base and disgusting of us, isn't it?'

Mrs. Colborne declared the firm conviction that neither she nor Frank was capable of rejoicing over a calamity which they had been powerless to avert; but resignation, she pointed out, was a virtue, not a crime; and surely it was not forbidden to survivors to recognise and return thanks for any compensating circumstances that might be attendant upon the death of one whom they had loved. She hinted so plainly at one compensating circumstance which she conceived to exist as regarded her son that Frank ended by saying point-blank:

'You really think he will marry Miss Rowley, then?'

'Oh, I don't for a moment say that he will; although, as I dare say you know, the match would be one that I have always wished for. But I wouldn't for the world question him; and indeed I know nothing about it. All I know is that she has lately refused two very good offers, and that she has now started off on a voyage round the world with a party of her friends.'

'So that, if she has started East, and if he were to start West——'

'Oh, but of course he won't. How could he, with his official duties to attend to? Only perhaps, when she returns——. However, we shall see what we shall see. For Heaven's sake, don't repeat anything that I have said to him.'

Frank did nothing so foolish as that; nor, after a long talk

which he had with his cousin in the course of the evening, did he feel by any means as confident as Mrs. Colborne appeared to feel that her son would face a second time the risks and disillusion of matrimony. Douglas spoke cheerfully enough and assumed no broken-hearted airs ; but he was altered, he was perceptibly older, and the advice with which he thought fit to season his congratulations sounded like that of a man who has played the game, has failed at it, and does not mean to play any more. Such advice is seldom worth much, and is never considered to be worth anything by those to whom it is addressed ; but Frank listened goodhumouredly, suppressing his smiles and inwardly flattering himself that he was in no danger of falling into the errors against which he was cautioned. Only, when Douglas had concluded his homily, he made so bold as to remark :

‘What you say would be very much to the point, old man, if Florry didn’t care a hang for me and if I didn’t care a hang for her ; but, you see, that isn’t the state of the case.’

‘I suppose,’ returned his monitor, ‘that the generality of people are in love when they marry ; but a great many of them, if not the generality, hasten to fall out of love, because they don’t know how to give and take. At least, I am acquainted with one lamentable instance which supports my theory.’

‘Well—of course I don’t know all the circumstances, and I mustn’t presume to judge. Besides, I am not sure that I understand exactly what your theory is. You sound as if you meant that it was a mistake to marry at all.’

‘I shouldn’t be surprised if that was what I do mean,’ answered Douglas, with a laugh ; ‘but I am not insane enough to expect you to agree with me. Try to understand your wife and to make allowances for her, that’s all. I did neither ; so that I have no more right to preach than has a man who has disregarded the rules of the game and lost it through his own stupidity.’

‘There is such a thing as a second innings,’ Frank ventured to observe.

‘Of course there is, at some games ; but a duffer does well to recognise that he is a duffer and retire. Added to which, my mother, who has been endeavouring, I am sure, to convince you that there ought to be a second innings at all games, has a happy knack of believing everything that she wishes to believe. The gift isn’t hereditary, I am sorry to say—or glad to say. At any

rate, I think she may safely make arrangements for sitting at the head of my table until the end of the chapter.'

Frank had the good sense to drop the subject and to dilate upon his own happy prospects till it was time to go to bed. But when, on the following day, he rode over to Swinford Manor, to pay his respects, as in duty bound, to a valuable ally of his, he was plainly told that his prospects, however interesting they might once have been, were no longer worthy to be compared in importance with those of a lady who had abruptly and without sufficient ostensible cause closed her house and abandoned her territorial responsibilities in order to visit the Antipodes.

'Lucky you have been, sir,' Peter Chervil said, 'and 't ain't me as begrudges you your luck. Nor yet I don't begrudge her Ladyship nothin'; though, as regards of my share in bringin' about this here marriage, I'm bound to say as she ain't hardly done justice to it. Not so far. For 'tis a risky thing, you see, sir, for a man in my position to be deliverin' of billys on the sly. Howsomever, I don't make no account of that: 'tis settled and done with; and glad I am as 'tis settled and done with. But what I want to know, sir,' continued Peter, straightening his shoulders and laying down the syringe with which he had been deluging a spray of stephanotis, 'is this. What's goin' to be settled between Miss Peggy and our Member o' Parlyment? Is he goin' to come forrard or is he not? Because in my opinion he did ought for to come forrard, and I don't mind your tellin' him from me as my vote depends upon it. Radical I am; but there's Tories as is more Radical nor me, from all I hear, and what I says is, I votes for a man as I can respect. Now, I don't feel no respect for a gentleman as can't speak up for hisself; nor I don't see no sort o' sense in sendin' them as should be at home, mindin' their own business, off to furrin parts for a year, or maybe eighteen months.'

'Give him time, Mr. Chervil,' pleaded Frank. 'You must remember that he hasn't been very long a widower and that public-decency has to be considered.'

'I'll give him till next election, sir. If he ain't done his dooty afore then, I'll do mine—which will be to vote agin' him. Likewise to indooce others for to do the same. Maybe you think as a gardener didn't ought for to meddle with what consarns his betters; but I've kep' my eyes and ears open, and I know what I know. And what I've said to you, sir, I shall be obliged if you'll say to Mr. Colborne.'

Frank, it is needless to state, did not deliver this bellicose message to Peter Chervil's parliamentary representative; but he could not resist mentioning it to Mrs. Colborne, who was much diverted.

'Your friend is quite right,' said she; 'I entirely agree with him as to Peggy's reasons for having fled the country, and I am as clear as he is about Douglas's duty. Only, as you very truly say, one must have patience and allow time to do its work. The world goes round, and people who can afford it go round the world; but all roads lead to Rome. Personally, I don't feel the slightest anxiety about the result of the next election.'

The sentiments of the Right Honourable Douglas Colborne's constituents have not been tested since the above confident declaration on his mother's part; but at the present time of writing a general election is known to be at hand, and it is not impossible that a considerable number of votes may follow that of Peter Chervil. Nobody really knows—though a great many people pretend to know—the motives which sway the uninstructed voter; and indeed, for the matter of that, none of us can do more than guess at the motives whereby our nearest neighbours are influenced. It may, however, fairly be conjectured that the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs has not devoted his summer holiday to a voyage across the Atlantic merely in order to study the working of the United States' system of government, while it is an ascertained fact that Miss Rowley and her friends will arrive at New York from San Francisco about the time when he is due to reach that city.

After all, a man must needs fulfil his manifest destiny, however devious may be the paths that lead him to it; and it would be a thousand pities if two neighbouring properties, neither of which is as yet provided with a direct heir, were to remain severed and thus bereft through over-strained scruples or misgivings. Douglas Colborne and Peggy Rowley are still young; life still lies before them; the present and the future are still theirs; and it is to be expected, as well as hoped, that neither of them will cast many more backward glances at that past which lies buried under the mountain of marble that marks the Countess R tomb.

THE END.



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